

Voyagers Saga: Broken Nest

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Summary: Exiled from their own universe, a group of travelers have crashed unto an unfamiliar Earth. Keeping their secret from the locals is going to be the least difficult of their problems, especially with their ship and crew scattered. Not to mention the secrets that this world itself possesses. Later chapters are rated T.

1. The Mid-Guardian Serpent

****Voyagers Saga****

****Broken Nest****

****Chapter 1: The Mid-Guardian Serpent****

'Welcome back to Consortium Sanctioned News. Our top story again: fighting has intensified between rival NSC factions in the wake of the successful Empire missile strike that hit an emergency session 2 weeks ago. The board of directors has recommended that all ships avoid NSC space and the uncharted sectors until an all-clear is given...'

After the harrowing escape from McNeil's coup, spirits were down on the Bladestorm, particularly with the experiments.

"I can't believe you tried to ditch us on Hawaii. Using that teleporter to beam most of us back was a dirty trick," snapped Draco.

"You guys would have been better off on Earth," said Matt, "There aren't going to be many safe havens now. You think I could have dragged you all into a civil war?"

"We've always stuck together," said Contrinus accusingly.

"And we always try to keep ourselves safe. Which is why you should

stayed back on Earth. Half of the galaxy is probably gunning for us," said Matt.

"Coming out of Null, negative contact on scopes. I think we're clear," said Techo's voice on the intercom.

"Keep your guard up. I'm not taking any chances," said Matt.

"Ok, looks like we're over an earthlike. It'd be passable as Earth if it wasn't for the second moon.

"Based on past experience, if an Earth-like world has more than one moon, it probably falls into the 'fantasy' category," said Chip.

"Better go look. I'm headed to the bridge, Techo," said Matt, saying the last part into the intercom.

...

...Guardian system online...

Unauthorized vessel detectedâ€¦class 4 technology

Attempting to warn vessel away...compliance failure detected...deploying to combat mode in T Minus 5

...

The Bladestorm slowly sailed by the second moon, no one onboard noticing as it began to uncurl.

If they had checked the planet below, they'd have noticed the tidal changes were starting much too early and seem to be a bit more extreme than usual.

...

Matt walked onto the bridge and saw the comm screen flashing with a message. He looked at it to see a load of Atlantean gibberish. "Hey, how long has this been flashing?" he asked, spotting the only word he recognized, indicating 'hostility'.

"Uh, for the last few seconds," said Techo, "For all I know, it's an old ad for crystals or something."

"Warning...impact alert," said WARDEN before a resounding crash threw everyone to the floor.

"Techo, if we survive, I'm going to have you learn to read Atlantean," said Matt as he got back up.

"What the hell is that thing? It's bloody huge!" yelled Chloe as a huge shadowy shape seemed to swim through space in front of the ship, a single huge red optic staring at them before it flew forward again.

"I know robots don't normally have stomachs, but I feel compelled to say GET US OUT OF HERE BEFORE IT EATS US!" yelled Matt.

"Can't...that last hit literally broke off the jump boosters. FTL is down and we need another hour before we can null-jump," said Techo.

"Wake Alice up...and get the North Star. Chloe, you take that, we'll fight it then."

...

The experiments and Kala looked around in horror as the battle stations siren shrieked, Alice and her pilots running past.

"What the smeg is going on?" asked Draco.

"I'm not certain if I want to find out," said Contrinus.

Another crash threw them off and Matts yell over the intercom said, "Oh, bloody hell, it's a giant metal space snake! I KNEW THEY EXISTED!"

"I am not having great confidence in our captain right now," said NegaMorph.

...

The North Star slowly flew out of the Bladestorm, currently caught in one of the machine's magnetic coils, flanked by every Starfury on board. "North Star to alpha flight, let that tin can have it," said Chloe's voice, before the North Star's torpedoes and the Starfuries opened fire, causing the machine to lose interest in the Bladestorm and chase them, smashing a Starfury with a swipe as they peeled off.

The other Starfuries started pelting its hull with torpedoes until several panels around its 'head' extended out and folded aside to allow a pair of cannons to flip out.

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Matt pointed, spotting that. "Main guns, fire!" he yelled pointing.

...

The Bladestorm's MAC railguns blazed, their heavy shells slamming the machine who roared soundlessly, before a white beam lanced out of its optic, blasting clean through the Bladestorm's midsection.

...

"Warning, hull breach, warning, fracture of superstructure, warning, orbit failing," rang out the computer.

"Shit, Techo!" yelled Matt.

Techo, pulling himself up on a computer looked at the damage report. "Do you want the good news or the bad news?" he asked.

"There's only one bad news?" asked Matt a bit sarcastically.

"The good planet down there's Earth," said Techo, mock cheerfully.

"And the bad?" asked Matt.

"We're gonna explode in 3 minutes," said Techo in a deadpan voice.

"That it would come to this," muttered Matt before activating the intercom, "All hands abandon ship. Get to the lifepods."

WARDEN said "Hey, what about me?"

Matt looked around before saying manically, "Good news, you're now the captain and captains go down with the ship...bye now!" before running out after the rest of the crew

Matt ran round a corner, just in time as an explosion forced the bulkhead to the bridge to drop. "Kala, what the hell, get on a pod," he said.

"There are still more people that need to get out," said Kala before pausing to absorb some of the flames from the recent explosion.

"I don't care. Get off this ship NOW!" snapped Matt before the ship shook again.

"Alert...exterior pressure rising...structure fields failing in sections 12 through 18 all decks," said the computer.

"But the crew..."

"Kala, you can't save everyone. There's no time to wait, get into a pod," said Matt.

"Warning: Core breach in progress. 3 minutes to detonations...all regular crew pods now launched. Exec pod remaining," said the computer. Matt sighed, knowing both that the captain's escape pod was a single seater...and that Kala would insist he take it. So he was personally regretting his only course of action as he set his blaster to neural stun.

"Matt, what are you..." started Kala before Matt shot her, causing her to fall over in a daze.

Matt caught her and said, "Sorry, but you're getting off this ship, willing or not."

"No...wait..." she managed as Matt dropped her into the pod and stepped outside it to launch. "Don't worry, there's still some fighters aboard. I'll use one of them. Happy landings," he said, not adding that he wasn't sure about the fighter situation.

...

Damage report: 65% armor impaired

Scanning...no FTL capabilities detected in remaining

vessels

Assessment: Switching to containment protocols

Standing down to repair mode

Error, magnetic coil three unable to decouple, ship core destruction within 3 cycles

Chances of destruction 99.7%

...

Matt pulled on the controls as collateral wreckage from the front section, flying over him began pelting the fleeing ships, a few more pods falling prey. "Crapcrapcrap!" he swore, swerving around before calling the others, "Is everyone ok? Sound off."

"This is Alice, we lost two ships while keeping that space snake's attention, but the rest are ok," said Alice's voice.

"North Star. We took a few hits from debris and WARDEN's download failed. We'll have to ground the ship if we can't get another AI," said Chloe's voice before another male voice said "This is Captain Mendiz, we lost 22% of the pods in flight...and 40% of the crew didn't get off the ship..." Matt sighed. He knew losing a ship often meant losing much of the crew, but it still was a hard blow to him.

"The front section's...gonna splash down in the Mediterranean, no chance of collateral. Looks like a good to land just off the Norway coast," said Mendiz before he let out a swear. "Shit...looks like your pod auto launched without you. It's taken damage and it's off course. Just as well it wasn't used, eh?"

There was a brief pause of shock before Matt yelled, "GET THAT POD!" so loudly everyone got feedback.

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Kala looked out the viewport in the escape pod to see the planet rushing up to meet her with frightening speed. _'Ok, so I'm doomed. Even if I live, I'll be trapped lord knows where...'_ she thought.

"You will live, but not without...complications," said a voice out of nowhere.

Kala turned and jumped when she saw a man in a black business suit. "What are you doing here?" demanded Kala.

"Oh please, you think Mr. Lynch hallucinates me?" said the figure.

"Wait, you're that Ancient guy, the one that shows up only when Matt's in dire danger," said Kala, her panic escalating.

"Yes...but there's always a price. Now if you died, he'd almost certainly turn homicidal within a few months...and we can't have that," said Mr. Black, with an evil smirk.

"Ok, there's obviously a catch. What's the catch?" demanded Kala.

"Oh, you'll find out," said Mr. Black, summoning what looked like a baseball bat, "And the best thing is...I don't need to use any energy on you...just make sure you're asleep."

Kala glared. "Don't you da-" she said before being cut off by a 'bonk'.

...

At a certain island in the Northern Sea, the villagers were watching the spectacular light show that was happening in the sky. Though some people were having different reactions than others.

Mulch sighed as Bucket screamed about Ragnarok again. "Bucket, it's not the end of the world. No snake for a start," he said calmly before another hail of shots went by with a deafening whistling noise

Just then, several columns of water shot up with a loud splash. "What's going on?" demanded Stoick.

"My guess is the gods and giants are going at it again and their teeth are being knocked out and they're falling down to Midgard," said Gobber. The others gave him a slightly odd look. "Well, it's only a guess," said Gobber.

A slowly rising noise was heard before a fireball parted the clouds and lit up the village as it passed overhead, before exploding against the mountain's summit. Through the opened clouds a cluster of similar fireballs could be seen closing at high speed.

"Uh, is it me, or are those flaming pieces of metal coming down from the sky?" asked Hiccup.

"Well, they don't look stone, certainly not bones," said Gobber.

"I don't care if they're made of seashells, everyone needs to get to safety before they hit," said Stoick. As if to force the point, one of the chunks hit an empty storage hut blasting it apart, while another two hit the harbor, causing columns of water that tops the old defense towers with ease. "Get to the caves, we should be safe enough there," ordered Stoick.

However, most of the pieces seemed to have stopped, except for one which seemed to be trying to change direction.

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"Warning...stabilizer two failure...trajectory alteration required," said the AI urgently, as if the sound of flames from outside was enough to tell Kala she was in trouble. However, something was wrong with her limbs. She couldn't seem to get them forwards like she wanted. It was like being in dragon form, but something was different. "Alert...reality field: Type 7 detected...localized pulse. Reality generators offline...terrain alert," said the AI desperately,

before a forest loomed up.

Kala yelped before flinging herself forward, within reach of the control panel. However, as she reached out her paw, she noticed her skin was black and the leg was differently shaped than before. _'What the...survival now, panic attack later,'_ she thought before clumsily punching a code in.

"Incorrect...please re-enter code or attempt voice ident," said the computer calmly

"This is Kala Triseptus!" yelled Kala, but it only came out as a roar.

"Please pronounce Ident clearly." said the computer calmly as the pod shook, clipping a tree

"This is Kala Tri...smeg it!" snapped Kala, getting only animalistic roaring and trying to put the code in again.

"Security alert...attempting uplink to Bladestorm...ERROR...system alter...deadlocking pod for retrieval," said the computer before with a resounding crash, the pod suddenly span, having hit a more resistant tree and was now pinwheeling through the air. This of course sent Kala tumbling around her pod like clothes in a washing machine.

The pod finally came to rest, a trickle of water coming in.

"Urgh...that was an unpleasant ride," she moaned weakly. The deadlock feature had been Chloe's idea, to stop any intruders escaping off ship...and was geared for hybrids. She tried to get to her feet, but her body didn't seem able to rise any higher than a quadrupedal position.

"Danger...power core overload detected...shutting down." Considering that loss of power means loss of life support and this pod was airtight, this meant Kala couldn't mess around with the control panel now and she really needed to get out. So she decided to see if she still had her fire breath. A try of the usual exhale failed. _"Oh nonononono,"_ she muttered, pushing against the hatch and actually feeling it strain to hold. Inspired, she pushed even harder against it.

The straining got worse, the sound of air getting in sounding with a reptilian hiss before, with a metallic pop, it gave way. Kala tried to crawl through, but she soon found her wings were open too wide to let her pass...and did she have more than one pair? Backing up, she folded them tighter around her before crawling out. _"Ok, now that I'm not going to die from a deadly crash or asphyxiation, let's see what the damage is,"_ she said before trying to get a good look of herself.

She hopped down to be almost up to her neck in water, looking around to see the pod had smashed down in some 'bowl' in the rocks, the pod already sinking into the mud.

However the show stopper was her reflection...

Kala screamed which fittingly came out as a roar as she was some time of feral dragon. _"This is not happening,"_ she gibbered, looking at

the almost catlike blue eyes staring back. She tried to stand up, but her salamander-like body was clearly meant to be a quadruped and not even flapping her four wings could help. The best she could do was sit on her rear legs and 'waddle' along. _"This is going to be one of these days,"_ she said darkly.

"Ok, so I had a bad reentry that's overwritten my personal reality field. It's not irreversible. I'll just the others and they can get me a reality shield. I'm sure they'd recognize me, especially Matt," she said to herself. She flapped her wings and managed to get off the ground, but the aerodynamics of this form was quite different from her own. Still, she at least managed to spot a town before she ended up falling back down. _"Ok...ow...I hate everything,"_ she said, her face muffled from having landed in the mud.

...

The town looked surprisingly busy, though a few people noticed her and didn't seem bothered. Her audio translators were luckily still working, though the nanites happily explained that her vocal cords were 'incompatible with Atlantean mecha-guild tech'. This at least allowed her to understand that they were calling her 'Toothless' for some reason.

She was pretty sure she still had her full set of teeth. She ran her tongue over her gums but didn't feel anything particularly toothy...

'Shik'!

Kala's eyes went bug eyed at that as her teeth shot out and bit her. Kala gave a yelp and jumped back in surprise, causing her to fall over herself. _"Doobib teeb...WAB DA HELB?"_ she said, yelling the last part.

"Does Toothless seem to be a bit...off today?" asked one of the nearby villagers.

Kala glared and said _"Oh foob oo, abbole,"_ before trotting past them, her nose smelling something tasty. She quickly made her way towards the docks where she soon spotted the source of the delectable smell: fish, very fresh fish, some of them were still gaping and flopping. _"I could smell that? No...just no,"_ she said, her stomach supplying a counterargument.

One of the fishermen spotted her and called, "Hey Toothless, care for a treat?" He tossed one fish to Kala and despite her mental protests, her instincts made her catch the fish in her mouth.

One quick swallow later and, despite the lovely taste all over her tongue, the only think in her head was the following: _'EWEWEWEWEWEWEWEWEWE!'_ Worst of all, she was hungry for more and her stomach was winning out over her brain.

As everyone who knew Kala or experiments knew, a experiments, even an ex-one's hunger urges were always top of the list, meaning she immediately lunged at one of the fish baskets with all the self-control of Matt in the armory.

"Hey, hey, save some for the rest of the village," said the

fisherman.

"Quiet, eating," muttered Kala aimlessly, her eyes actually going cross-eyed.

"Odd, he's acting like hasn't eaten anything all day," said another fisherman.

"We better get Hiccup before his dragon eats up all the catch," said the first.

"What?" said a voice behind them, the fishermen turning to see a kid walking round the corner before pausing as a green eyed version of Kala's head peered round the corner.

The fishermen turned to look from the dragon eating their catch to the one besides the boy. "Did I get hit on the head again?" asked one of the fishermen, rubbing around the bucket on his head, "I'm seeing double."

"I said QUIET, EATING!" snapped Kala, manically, one of her eyes twitching from the experiment instinct fueled food binge.

"I don't believe it," said the boy, "Another Night Fury. I thought Toothless was the only one around here."

"For the last smegging time...EXPERIMENT HYBRID EATING HERE!" snapped Kala.

"Uh, Hiccup, I know it's a bad idea to get between a dragon and its meal, but this one's meal is starting to get out of control," said the shorter fisherman.

"Finally some sense," said Kala sarcastically, actually swallowing an eel without noticing. That's when her stomach gave another kind of gurgle, the unhappy kind. _"Oh no,"_ moaned Kala before the eel made a return journey.

The humans looked away with disgust as Kala's recently-eaten lunch became...uneaten. _"Urgh...I think I threw up my spleen,"_ groaned Kala.

"Ok, I think it's appetite will settle down for a while," said the boy, "We probably ought to take her to the academy."

"Say what?" said Kala dully, looking up with a dull look.

"I dunno, she won't like being in a cage," said the fisherman with the bucket.

"You can bet your patookie I wouldn't. First person to touch me gets swallowed," Kala snapped before seeing the other dragon's expression and saying defensively, _"I'd spit them out again."_

"Bucket, you're not supposed to mention the c-word," said the shorter fisherman.

"What? Cage?" asked Bucket.

_"Just you wait till my bushi bu catches up. He has a temper that

'blast radius' applies to,"_ said Kala smugly

Just then, she heard another voice saying, "Alright, what's all this about a ravenous dragon? Oh, lookee here, another Night Fury. Didn't think there were any besides Toothless."

"Uh, yeah, and we need to get it to-" started the boy.

"Say no more, I've got what we need," said the voice before Kala heard a swinging sound. She turned just in time to see a man missing his left hand and right leg throw a bolas at her. Unfortunately for the bola thrower, Kala had spent the last year being shot at with things far worse than bolas, easily deflecting it with her tail before sitting down. _"Really?!"_ she said

"Smart one," said the bola thrower, "I guess I'll need to get out the big ones for this dragon."

"Big ones?" said Kala, in a worried tone. The one-legged man reached into his cart and pulled out a large weapon that looked like a disturbing mix of sword, axe, and mace.

"What...the...hell...is...THAT?" said Kala, backing up.

"Gobber..." said the boy.

"Relax, I just figured we could herd into the corral by making seem like the only safe place to go," said the one-handed man.

"Hey look, it's the Titanic!" called Kala, trying to point behind them.

The trick was lost in 'translation' as Gobber calmly walked forward. "Alright, beastie, hold still..." said Gobber before holding up the scary weapon over her head.

Kala simply screamed and shot in the opposite direction, stopping briefly at the corner and, unable to resist, calling _"MEEGA NALA QUEESTA!"_ before a bola knocked her into the wall. _"Bugger,"_ she swore.

"Got it," said Gobber before grabbing the rope and said "Alright, let's haul this thing to the academy."

Kala glared. _"Oh, just you wait,"_ she muttered as she was dragged along before glaring at Toothless. _"You could help, you know,"_ she said, taking a gamble that he could understand.

Toothless looked at her before saying, _"I may have been away from my kind of a long time, but I think there's something wrong with you and I think Hiccup better have a look at you."_

"I'm not a dragon! I used to have thumbs! THUUUUMBS!" gibbered Kala, yelling the last word as she was dragged round the corner by the one called Gobber.

Toothless shook his head and muttered, _"Mental."_

...

Matt looked around the makeshift camp that had sprung up around the North Star. The ship had landed at an almost completely frozen island that wasn't on any maps from this Earth's history. Of course, the crew had more than enough insulation tents, heat packs, and winter survival gear to make living at this camp bearable. But there was plenty of dark muttering about how cold it was.

"We coulda flown to Hawaii or America, where it's warm?" complained Draco, bitterly while wrapped up in so many coats that he looked like a very strange teddy.

"Zip it, reptile," snapped Chris.

"I'm as zipped as can be and I'm still freezing," snapped Draco.

"That's because you missed one," said Chris before zipping Draco's hood shut.

"Thanks Chris. Someone tell me we have links on the missing pods. Last thing we need is a Viking finding an AR12 plasma rifle," said Matt.

Chip, who had to take the missing WARDEN's place in the AI core, said, "Our scanning systems were badly damaged during the escape. Currently, I can't scan any further away than two miles. There is some debris in the water but nothing very important."

"Then turn off the engines and reroute power. Kala's out there somewhere and I am going to find her before she freezes to death," snapped Matt angrily.

There was a softening hum as the engines died down before Chip said, "Scanner range has tripled and I've detected more than a few identifiable parts of the ship. I also have a weak signal that has a 66% chance of being her pod."

"Where is it?" snapped Matt angrily.

"An island to the southwest, apparently it's called 'Berk'," said Chip.

"Ok, inhabitants?" said Matt, the others noting his cold tone and how his eyes were faintly glowing.

"Humans, Norsemen most likely given the area and time period," said Chip, "I've got another type of life reading, but it's too varied to identified."

"Bind it down, use a DNA scanner. Ok, if there are humans there, we need a plan. The ship's too unreliable to fly there...plus we'd cause panic," said Matt.

"DNA scanner's crashed, I need more time to get the mainframe operational," said Chip, "But as for getting there, I'd say a boat would be the least conspicuous means of transportation."

"Sure...we'll use the boat I've got up my ARSE!" snapped Techo, who was still recovering from his gem blast that Diana had caused and as

a result was shivering.

"That would certainly explain your bad attitude," said Chip.

Techo glared and pressed the mute button, grinning. "I like this part...hey, what's that?" he said, pointing down at the beach below the cliff they were on.

Matt looked down to see what looked like an old Viking boat. It had probably ended up being knocked onto the rocks by a storm, but there seemed to be enough pieces to work with. "Seems fixable. Turn Chip's voice system back on so I can ask if the nanoforges are online. We need disguises," said Matt.

As soon as Chip was contacted, he said, "Sorry, even if the nanoforges were on, I couldn't help. Apparently, one of the few things they can't make is fur, not even fake fur. I think it has something to do with an animal rights committee."

"Override: 1124 nanoforge...uniform protocol," said Matt.

"Override accepted, processing uniforms," said Chip in an emotionless monotone.

Contrinus gave Matt a shocked look and said, "What did you do to him?"

"System override, we need those disguises, he'll be fine," said Matt, walking off.

...

However, the produced uniforms were less than favorable. "What kind of cheap costume is this?" asked Chloe, holding the cloth and plastic imitation of a fur cloak, "I've seen better costumes at my high school's plays."

"Hey, I'm a computer hacker, not a tailor," said Chip, "I told you the nanoforge couldn't produce realistic fur."

"Guys, ship approaching!" yelled a trooper.

"Smeg, bloody marauders again," snapped Chloe.

"No, an actual ship, they look pissed."

"Too bad, I'm more pissed," said Chloe, her hand cracking with electricity, "They're probably pirates anyways. Let's sink them."

Matt walked in at that. "No, I got a better plan. Let's introduce ourselves while we get the 'do not disturb' signs up," he said, grinning sinisterly.

...

The Outcast search party has been rowing all morning and was starting to get cranky. They've only found a few pieces of 'sky metal' and Alvin's sure to want more than that.

"Hey, look up there," said their lookout, to where an unnatural metal construct could be barely seen in the swirling snow.

"What do you think it is?" asked another.

"Maybe it's a piece of giant's armor," said a third.

"Whatever it is, it'll be enough to make armor for all of us," said Savage, "To your oars, men."

...

The island itself was creepy, the cliff itself, under the ice looked unnaturally smooth and uniform grey. A few pieces of ice fell down from the top of the cliff and scrabblings were heard in the snowstorm.

"There's something not right about this island," said one of the Outcasts.

"It's got evil written all over it," said another.

"Alvin'll have our hides if we go back empty handed," snapped Savage.

"Hey, look there," said the lookout, pointing to an incline in the ice that was ridged and level enough to allow them to walk up.

"I dunno, boss, this looks too easy," said another Outcast, looking up the incline and noticing how one of the steps was steaming.

"If you want to go up the hard way, be my guest," said Savage.

"Fine, ok, let's move. I heard stories about this place," said the worried Outcast.

"What, you think trolls live here?" teased another Outcast.

"No, I heard there were gods here, with machines that could work themselves, machines that could shatter axes and shrug off even dragons," said the Outcast, looking in the shadows, before looking up and jumping as he saw a hooded figure duck back.

"Right, next you're gonna say they have monsters for pets that are nastier and uglier than any dragon," said Savage.

"No, some of 'em were monsters," said the Outcast, peering over the top and gulping, seeing several tents scattered around.

"Curses, looks like someone's beaten us here," said Savage, "Round them up. Alvin's not inclined to sharing."

There was a fwip noise and one of the Outcasts fell back with an oof.

"What was that?" demanded Savage.

"I dunno, I think it-" began another before another 'fwip' was heard and he slumped over, something the size of a stone striking him on

the forehead.

"Who's out there?" demanded Savage, "Show yourselves!"

Three more 'fwips' were heard, three more Outcasts, leaving only a half dozen left. A creepy voice said "Someone's trespassing on my property," in a Saxon-accented voice...but in fluent Norse.

"Your property? This is our territory so everything here belongs to us," snapped Savage.

"Nope, try again," said the voice, echoing from the snowstorm that was picking up again.

"If this is your property, you wouldn't mind fighting man to man for it," said Savage.

"Fine, if we win, we get your cloaks, jackets, stuff like that. We'll let you keep your boat though," said the voice, a figure walking out of the snow, wearing a silvery coat with a fur hood.

"And when we win, we're taking your sky metal and tossing you all into the sea," said Savage.

"Oh, you won't win. I presume anything goes?" said the figure, amused.

"No holding back," said Savage holding up his bone like a club.

"Good," said the voice, his arm seeming to ripple before his other pulled out another blade. "Come and play, dufus," said the figure.

Savage let out a battle cry and ran towards the figure, readying to club him over the head. The figure simply sidestepped, slapping Savage's wrist with his blade's flat. "Oh, so close," the figure said, a disturbingly sharp toothed grin visible under the hood. However, Savage was too worked up to really care as he tried to pummel the stranger. The figure simply dodged and weaved before the bone hit him across the arm, shattering. "Ok, now I'm annoyed, that chipped a scale," said the figure sternly.

Savage looked dumbfounded at his broken bone before saying, "Who are you?"

"Not telling, but this is my camp...and you aren't welcome," said the figure, readying his blade.

Savage quickly lost his nerve and dropped to his knees crying, "Mercy!"

"Fine, the winnings please?" said the figure.

However, Savage suddenly grabbed the stranger's legs and pulled them out from under him, making him fall over. "Ha, like you said, anything goes," said Savage, "Now let's see how ugly you really are." He grabbed the stranger's hood and yanked it back.

Staring back at him was a blue scaled muzzled face. "Boo," said the

figure with a toothy grin before kicking Savage back and whistling, several mounds in the snow rising to reveal more figures, armed with metal sticks. "Anyone else want to tumble a bit?" asked the stranger.

"No," said one of the Outcasts, taking his coat off as fast as he could and throwing it forward, more so as a mountain of a man raised out the snow next to them. The others quickly threw in their coats. "There, all yours," said the first Outcast as he turned to leave.

However, the colossal man grabbed him and said, "Uh, uh, uh, that wasn't all you wagered."

"Wait...what else do you want?" said the Outcast, screaming like a girl as the man lifted him up without any effort.

The man held him up to his face before saying, "Your pants, please."

"Matt, Xander, no, we're not taking the pants. We don't know where they've been. No...scratch that. I can smell where they've been," said a female voice.

"Aw, but I really wanted to humiliate them," said the stranger.

"No...just no," said another voice.

The figure sighed, "Fine...leave the coats and sod off. If you come back, I'll eat you." To make the point clear, the giant tossed the outcast he was holding out into the sea. "Bye-bye," said the figure, waving and causing the outcasts to leg it. They quickly got back to their boat and started rowing like Ragnarok was right around the corner.

"Nice, now we got samples for the nanoforge," said Matt as soon as the boat was gone.

"I didn't think it worked that way," said Draco.

"It can...for short runs," said Matt, tossing the coats and the hat Savage had left behind to a couple of the spiderbots from the North Star.

"How long till that boat works, do you think?" Chloe sighed.

"It's a boat, it couldn't be harder to repair than a starship," said Matt.

"DON'T JINX IT!" yelled Draco.

...

Kala never liked being put in a cage and being put in one while being thought of as a dumb animal was particularly demeaning. _"LET ME OUT OF HERE!"_ she yelled, trying to gnaw on the bars. Unfortunately, it seems her dragon strength was only so great in this form as all she mainly got was some sore gums.

Finally she spotted the kid from earlier and that 'Toothless' guy.
"Oi...get me out!" she called.

However, Hiccup was oblivious to Kala's yelling. "Wow, Toothless, another Night Fury here on Berk. And a female, no less. I mean, what are the chances?"

Kala went bug eyed at that. _"Watch it, cheeky!"_ she snapped.

"She does seem pretty wound up though," said Hiccup.

"I woke up thumbless after my ship exploded. HOW WOULD YOU FEEL?" snapped Kala.

"I think we better keep her in there until she's calmed down. Maybe give her some dragonnip," said Hiccup.

"Oh, not a chance. I am not spending one more night in this cage," said Kala, her eye twitching before glaring at Toothless, _"Get me out or I'll make you suffer when I get out myself."_

"They mean well, they're just worried how dangerous you are when you're all riled up like this," said Toothless.

"Dangerous? I'm not dangerous but my boyfriend is. He'll blow a gasket if he sees me like this," said Kala, smugly.

"And where is he?" asked Toothless.

"Coming," said Kala with an evil grin. Toothless lifted his ear flaps and looked around, not looking convinced. _"Oh, he's not here...yet. But we were all headed for the same area. Which means he's...at least...say...30 or 40 km away?"_ said Kala, at a rough estimate. Toothless gave a snort of disbelief. _"Oh, many people make that mistake. I've seen him slice tanks in half,"_ said Kala happily.

"Slice what?" asked Toothless.

"Basically cutting rocks in half," said Kala.

"I have to see that to believe it," said Toothless dismissively.

"You will, live and in person, NOW GET ME OUT OF HERE!" snapped Kala, smashing against the bars

"Yeah, how about I wait until you sound less crazy before I consider letting you out?" said Toothless.

"It's either let me out or my boyfriend does," said Kala darkly.

"I'll wait to see if Thor arrives then," said Toothless.

"Who's Thor?" said Kala, confused, _"My boyfriend's name is Matt."_

"How could you not know who Thor is?" asked Toothless.

"Not from around here...or this planet...or this universe...I've lost you, haven't I?" said Kala, her voice dulling.

Toothless gaped before shaking his head and then leaning forward to sniff at Kala. _"You do smell different, but I wasn't really sure."_

"Well done, now open the smegging door," said Kala dully.

"Er, I can't, even if I wanted to," said Toothless, _"I can't turn the key."_

"Then get somebody who CAN! Really...Matt is kinda protective to insane levels," said Kala apologetically

"I'll try," said Toothless as he followed Hiccup out.

Kala sat back, deciding that all she could do was wait for now.

...

Pretty soon, the boat was in shipshape and the nanoforge had produced enough fur coats for everyone. However, it couldn't make much more than that. "It would seem that there are limitations to how much can be produced, at least in terms of animal-based products," said Chip, "I suppose if you were to collect more, I'd be able to forge more."

"We'll just need to be careful," said Matt, who was sitting up near the front of the ship as it sailed past a huge fogbank. "Big fog," he muttered.

"We're in the Northern Seas, that's to be expected," said Chloe.

"Yeah...but it stops too suddenly. You could run a spirit level up that fog bank," said Matt before shrugging, another mystery for another day. "Never mind. Ok, ground rules: all the experiments have to play pet...and no stealing any food that can be missed."

Megan noticed Gary was leaning over the side and asked, "Gary, are you feeling ok?"

"I'm fine," said Gary, "But I think there's something in the water."

"Like what?" said Matt, adding, "Chip, any life reading near us?"

"Well, something, I think, the water is interfering with my scanners," said Chip.

"Ok, thanks Chip," said Matt before walking over to Gary. "It's probably just a whale, Ga-" he said, peering over and pausing as well, a reptilian head peering back. "...That's a weird whale," he said before the two were blasted by a stream of water.

"Thar he blows," said NegaMorph. Matt luckily got some revenge as he landed directly on NegaMorph.

"Gary, what happened?" asked Megan.

"SEA SERPENT!" yelled Gary.

"Yeah...I saw it," moaned Matt from where he had landed.

"Oh please, I don't think we've been out at sea long enough for you to get sea madness," said Chloe. However, the water near the ship was starting to ripple as something started to arise. "I TOLD YOU!" snapped Matt, everyone pulling out a mixture of firearms, the blades they had were cheap knockoffs from the nanoforge.

Suddenly, a long neck that ended with a reptilian head that had had a single horn on its nose and a pelican-like chin came up out of the water and looked down at the boat. "Oh no," said Sue in a shaking voice before asking Draco, "Does this happen often?"

"Well, we do tend to meet dragons, not so much sea dragons on account that Matt hates being near deep water," said Draco.

A second later, a water blast drenched everyone. The dragon smirked before vanishing underwater again with an air of 'that'll teach 'em'. Chloe's teeth chattered as she said, "C-c-c-cold water, n-n-n-not fun."

"YOU JUMPED UP WATER HEA-" yelled Matt only for the dragon to shoot out the water and chomp him, shooting back again, the whole process happening in a blink, though the burp took longer.

"Ok, let's get to land where we can warm up and dry off," said NegaMorph.

On cue, something shot out of the water before the mast shook, everyone looking up to see a pair of legs poking out the crow's nest.

"Took him long enough," said NegaMorph.

"Screw you, NegaMorph," came the reply, NegaMorph's head glowing for a second before pancaking.

"Totally worth it," he rasped.

...

As they reached the island, it became apparent that the sea dragon apparently had some kind of venom. The good news is that Matt's nanites were enough to keep it from being lethal. The bad news is that his head seemed to be a little less screwed on than usual. "Squishy, squishy, squeak," he gibbered, squashing NegaMorph regularly and making him squeak like a dog's chew toy.

"Ok, this is getting really annoying," said NegaMorph, "Can someone make him stop?"

"SILENCE SQUEAKY SQUISH!" snapped Matt, squashing NegaMorph's mouth. Apparently fed up, NegaMorph chomped on Matt with his hand-mouth. "Ow, it bites!" yelled Matt, throwing NegaMorph overboard where the following Scauldron snapped him out the air.

However, unlike Matt, NegaMorph put up a more impressive fight, if the bulges in its chin were anything to judge by. Another spit and NegaMorph vanished over the horizon. "Bye-bye, squeaky...oooh...aaaargh," said Matt, turning green as the nanites finished processing the antidote and applied it, causing him to barf up the poison.

"About time, that squeaking was driving me crazy," said Chris.

"Urrrrgh...I hate everything. Are we there yet?" moaned Matt.

"Almost," said Chloe as she tried to adjust the sail, "C'mon, go faster, you stupid thing."

"Target, aerial's closing from port," called a trooper.

"Disguises, guys. Keep the guns down. I can see something on its back," called Matt, jumping down.

From a distance, it looked like a giant manta ray that was flying over the water. But as it got closer, it was obviously a large dragon with an almost-as-large Norseman riding on it.

"Bloody hell," muttered Techo.

The dragon stopped at a hover near their ship as the Norseman called, "You're a long ways away from anywhere. What brings you to Berk?"

"Erm...food...supplies...trade," called Matt carefully.

"There are closer islands," said the Norseman.

"We got lost," said Chloe, "Misleading fogbanks and alike."

"I understand. There's some nasty perils for an unwary ship in that fogbank," said the Norseman.

"Well, since your island's so close, can we make port here?" asked Chloe.

"Fine...as long as you don't mind dragons," came the reply, sounding amused.

"You'd be surprised how much we don't," called Matt.

â€|

As soon as they got to the harbor, they could see the usual flock of seagulls circling around. But they also spotted another more unusual flock on the docks. "Tiny dragons," pointed Matt desperately.

About 10 small green dragons were watching the ship come in with a sort of vacant walleyed look. "Aw, they look so cute," said Megan. One of the dragons licked its eyeball for a second. "Sort of."

"Yeah, they have the look of spiderbots around them," said Matt carefully

"I've seen Chihuahuas that look and sound more intimidating," said Chris.

The Terrible Terrors all turned to look at Chris at that...in unison.

"Uh, I think they're more intelligent than they look," said Gary.

"Oh please, they're just dumb little-ARRGH!" said Chris, screaming as the Terrible Terrors mobbed him

"The smaller they are, the more easily they can swarm you," said Matt.

The group walked onto the deck, looking around at the town. "Nice, never seen anything like this," muttered Techo, pulling the glove on his cyberarm tighter.

"It's charming, if rustic," said Chloe.

"And weird. I feel like I'm on Avalar again," said Matt, looking around confused and seeing a two-headed dragon peering from a roof.

"I think the dragons on Avalar are a bit more...advanced," said Chloe.

"True, I would have been threatened by now otherwise," said Matt

"Well, as long as we're here, let's get something to eat," said NegaMorph, "I'm famished."

"Ok, see if you can spot the currency here so we can use the currency converter," said Matt quietly.

Gary looked at some of the shops and said, "It looks like they mostly barter here."

"Ok, this might make things harder," said Matt before there was a thud behind him as the Norseman from before landed. "Nice little village you have here," said Matt.

"Thanks, you don't seem surprised to see...oh, you got a dragon of yer own. That some kinda Terrible Terror?" said the Norseman, looking at Draco.

Draco opened his mouth to protest but Matt held it shut. "No, he's a...foreign breed, from a place very far from here. Smarter than he looks, but not by much, OW!" said Matt, the last part from Draco scratching him. "He's...also...very...aggressive," growled Matt through the pain.

"I see, so long as he doesn't cause too much damage around here or try to attack the sheep, I don't have a problem," said the Norseman, "And in case it wasn't obvious, I'm Stoick the Vast, Chieftain of the

Hairy Hooligans."

"Matthew the erm...Crazy. Leader of the Temporal Raiders," said Matt, carefully.

"Temple Raiders? You have some pretty big nerves to be attacking places men would be considered holy," said Stoick.

"Er, that's actually..." started Matt.

"Also, I'm pretty sure 'the Crazy' is taken. Was it Carl the Crazy or Bjorn the Crazy?" continued Stoick.

"Oh, he's just playing around with names right now," said Chloe, "Other names in consideration are Matt the Unpredictable, Matt the Mirthful, and Matt Earbreaker."

"Oh har har," said Matt darkly

"It takes a while for the right name to settle," said Stoick, "But you're free to trade for what you need."

"Thanks, mind if I look around?" asked Matt.

"So long as you don't wander off alone. Have to be careful with potential spies and such," said Stoick.

"I'll be careful," said Matt, walking off and muttering "Spies for what?"

...

Eventually, Matt came upon an arena. Or what used to be an arena since the sign over the door said 'Berk Dragon Academy'.

"Well, this would count," he muttered, his nanites scanning.

"Anomalous lifesign detected in zone," said the voice of the nano-AI. Matt shrugged and walked inside, a single barred cell at the far end. "Cell consists of high tensile iron with stone-reinforced superstructure, possibly graded for draconics," said the AI.

"What the?" he muttered, walking forward before jumping back as a pair of blue reptilian eyes shot open. "Unknown draconic variant, attempting uplink to local info-guild network," said the AI to Matt's shock, rows of binary appearing as it hacked his glasses' HUD.

"Hey, I don't need this much info," said Matt.

"Irrelevant, all Atlantean Shar operatives must have all information. Primary uplink at capital: failed. Accessing local facilities, please stand by," said the AI dismissively.

"I suppose I shouldn't be surprised if they have facilities there," said Matt, "Maybe they'll have something useful."

"Access complete, lifeform identified, species: Nocturnis Furia, sentiency level: partial human, nonverbal, current threat to operative...zero," said the AI a rotating wire model appearing for a

second before the system continued "Abilities: Fighter grade flight agility, blaster proof scales, weapon of choice: High grade natural plasma bursts. No other information available."

Matt peered in as the dragon suddenly shot at the bars with a happy expression. "Hey there, girl."

...

Kala had never been happy to see Matt's bad disguises as he said, "Hey there, girl." before her hope vanished as he continued "Who'd lock a cool dragon like you up?"

"Matt, it's me, Kala, don't you recognize me at all?" asked Kala desperately.

"Wow, you musta been all alone for ages to be happy to see someone like me," said Matt, clearly not understanding a word before sighing. "First, I'll cut you out. Then I'm having a word with that Stoick guy about my views on dragon slavery," he said, pulling out a nanostick, putting it in the lock where it began to eat the lock's innards.

Kala wasn't pleased about Matt failing to recognize her, but at least she's getting out of this cage.

...

Matt nodded as the first lock, a practical girder for a deadbolt fell in half, wincing at the loud clang, before reaching for his second when he noticed the dragon seemed to be trying to point behind him. "Oh no," he said dully. He quickly turned around, hiding the nanostick and the busted lock behind his back. He spotted a lanky teenage boy with a peg leg and a dragon of the same species as the one in the cage. "Uh, hi there," said Matt.

"What are you doing?" asked the boy, curiously, the last of the girder giving up behind Matt before the pieces in view visible collapsed into sand.

"Er, I think this dragon has acid-spitted your cage apart," said Matt.

"Night Furies don't have acid spit and there aren't any Changewings here," said the boy before looking around, "At least I don't think there are."

Matt was already weighing his options. His HUD was flashing a 'timeline specific' warning so simply stunning the kid and his pet were out the question. "Erm...I think I saw one earlier," he tried, getting an idea before putting the other nanostick on the remaining lock behind him, this time emptying the lot on the lock, causing the metal to practically disintegrate. "Hope this works," he muttered. He started to edge when he bumped into something. He looked where he was going, but didn't see anything in his way. "What the..." he muttered before poking at the 'solid air' in front of him.

As it turned out, there had been a Changewing in the arena, having followed the group from their camp...as being woken up mid nap by someone landing a 300 ton ship on your tail often annoys.

Suddenly, Matt felt something wrapping his arms to his side. "Hey, what's going on here?" he demanded when a draconic head with long antenna that was binding Matt appeared out of thin air. "Oh no, this is just the crappiest day I've had this month," said Matt gloomily before saying, "You have acid breath, don't you?" The dragon hissed, bits of spit dripping from its mouth to hiss on the stone floor. "Thought as much. You're gonna eat me, aren't you," said Matt, the dragon seeming to think about it before nodding and pointing to its tail which seemed a bit flatter then was healthy at its tip, with a landing strut imprint on it. "Ooooh...I told them to look where they were going," said Matt before he remembered what was about to happen, "Oh yeah..."

With that, the Changewing flew out the Academy door with Matt in its clutches. "Ok, that's something you don't see every day," said Hiccup before getting onto Toothless, "Let's go." However there was the sound of screeching metal as the other Night Fury shot out in pursuit.

...

The Changewing was surprised. It had chased this stray human after he had parked on its tail...and now he was taking it for some quiet revenge it didn't even have the dignity to scream. "Just you wait till we're out of sight. I'm gonna kick your scaly arse," said the human gleefully.

However, a plasma burst suddenly shot out ahead, barely missing the Changewing. "Hey, that wasn't mine," said Matt before noticing the kid and his dragon flying after them. "Oh, great," said Matt, sounding less happy than he should have.

The Changewing however snorted with contempt, diving into the trees, his skin matching perfectly to the background and doubling back, the duo flying overhead. "That's interesting," commented Matt before the AI kicked back in.

"Draconic lifeform: Metamorphis Acido. Weapons of choice: molecular acid. Known to hold extreme grudges and be highly territorial. Threat level: 9. Do not approach," said the AI

"Gee, thanks for the warning," said Matt sarcastically.

"No locals in range. Releasing locks on mutagenic capacities," said the AI calmly.

"It's about time," said Matt as he attempted to change into his dragon form.

The Changewing yelped as his lunch turned into a dragon equal to his size that said in human. "I did warn you." The Changewing immediately vanished as Matt sprayed the area in a storm of plasma bolts that caused a row of explosions.

"Additional information: Metamorphis Acido is an ambushing hunter," said the AI

"So it can camouflage, I can still hear it," said Matt, pausing to listen for the tell-tale sound of branches moving.

"The lightweight musculature and bones of this lifeform also act as natural sound dampening. As a result only its difficulty to obtain prevented its widespread inclusion in the Shar project," said the AI happily. Matt heard a hiss and barely moved before a spray of acid melted the tree in front of him, causing him to spin and blast the area.

...

Kala looked around, desperate to catch up before hearing Toothless not far behind her, calling for her to slow down. _"Not a chance, that's my bushi bu with that acid-spitting chameleon,"_ snapped Kala.

"What? That human? Wow," said Toothless, having caught up and sounding a little dumbfounded before a series of explosions was heard from the other side of the island.

"That's Matt alright," said Kala before zooming for where the explosions were coming from.

...

Matt, panting and furious, said "COME OUT, YOU COWARDLY GECKO!" There was a moment of silence before the Changewing suddenly sprang out of nowhere and latched onto Matt. Matt roared, simply choosing to take off to do a few barrel rolls and get it off before there was a hiss and a searing blast of pain...and down he went.

"Alert, critical organic damage, suspending mutagenic abilities for nanorepairs," said his AI before he turned back...in midair.

"SMEGSMEGSMEGSMEGSMEGSMEGSMEG!" yelled Matt as he plummeted. One thump later and Matt was on his back with the Changewing circling. "Is this how it ends? Melted by a dragon," Matt muttered, before a blue plasma bolt slammed into the side of the Changewing.

Matt looked up to see the female dragon from before zooming in and headbutting the Changewing, sending it crashing into the ground. She roared at it for good measure. "Wow," said Matt, before noticing the Changewing getting up and tossing a concussive plasma blast at it, knocking it out. "Bad dragon," he said.

Then the Night Fury landed and quickly went over to Matt, licking him all over. "Ok, ok, I'm happy to see you, stop now," said Matt.

To Kala's credit, she was a bit horrified by her own actions...oh and how her boyfriend tasted, which was of mud, meatloaf and gunpowder. _"When did you last bath, Matt?"_ she said weakly.

"Uh, nice dragon, good girl," said Matt before scratching her head.

_"__Oh you stop that right now or...ooooooh...niiiiice!"_ said Kala, nastily before Matt caught her behind her ear.

"Aw, you're just a big puppy, aren't you?" said Matt. Kala glared and smacked him in the gut. "Ooof...maybe not," groaned Matt before the

kid, riding the other black dragon, landed behind them.

"It looks like she's really attached to you," said the kid.

"She slobberized me," said Matt, wincing as he got up before looking at the Changewing. "Little acid spitter," he grumbled.

"What did you do to set that Changewing off?" asked the kid.

"I, uh, stomped on its tail...by accident," said Matt.

The kid looked at the flattened tail end and said "With what?"

"My...really big boot," said Matt. The kid gave him a disbelieving look. "Ok, a sledgehammer, I don't have to explain everything about myself. It was...erm...stealing...my...sandwich...yes, my sandwich," said Matt, happy at, in his head negotiating an enormous whopper of a fib.

"What's a sandwich?" asked Hiccup.

"Dammit!" snapped Matt, before jumping back as the dragon next to him nudged him again. "Do dragons usually stalk?" he asked.

"Well, if they have a grudge against you, but this seems more like the opposite," said Hiccup.

"That's what I meant," moaned Matt, muttering, "Kala'll kill me."

The Night Fury let out a roar that unknown to Matt translated to "_I AM KALA!"_

"She also roars one second and licks me the next," said Matt, puzzled.

"I can't explain it either," said Hiccup, "But I think she's basically telling she likes you."

"Wait, what?" said Matt, in shock.

"As in she wants you to be her rider," said Hiccup.

Matt just stopped at that, a thousand thoughts all rumbling before he said "I...erm..." for once his smartarse tongue throwing in the towel.

Kala gave a shrug, deciding to go with it until Matt got the full message. She grabbed the back of his shirt with her mouth before tossing him back onto her back. Sadly, Matt just ended up bouncing off her back and landing on his head behind her with an 'oof'. Kala gave an annoyed growl before scooping Matt with the top of her head and letting him slide onto her back.

Matt looked around before noticing he had the view of the wrong end. "Oh no," he whimpered as he felt the dragon's flight muscles preparing for takeoff before Kala took off, causing the ill-gripping Matt to do a barrel roll in the air and land on his head again, this time getting his helmet wedged over his head. "Whyyyy?" he

moaned.

"Uh, don't worry, it took me and Toothless a while before we got the hang of flying together," said Hiccup.

"Oooowwww...I think my helmet's wedged in the ground," moaned Matt.

...

Sometime later, Toothless and Kala returned to Berk. However, Matt still hadn't quite gotten the hang of dragonriding, especially since his helmet was stuck over his eyes, so Kala had to carry him.

The first thing he did upon being dropped was yell "TECHO, GET THIS HELMET OFF MY HEAD!" The first thing his men did was laugh.

"What took you so long?" asked Chloe.

"Long story, helmet off head now!" said Matt sharply only for the female dragon to grab the helmet and shake Matt till he came loose with a pop...and flew into a wall.

"I see you've made a new friend," said Chloe.

"Yes, we're planning a summer wedding," said Matt, sarcastically to a level that not even the Hooligans could take it wrong. The female dragon made a sound that could almost be disappointment.

Matt grabbed Chloe and pulled her away while the kid began talking to Stoick. "What are we gonna do? We can't take a pet and if it stays here...well, the cell it was in didn't look 4 stars if you get my meaning," Matt whispered.

"Well, we're not going anywhere for a while," said Chloe, "For one thing, the North Star can't cover nearly as much distance as the Bladestorm could. Besides, we have missing crew unaccounted for."

"I know, but we won't be here forever," said Matt.

"I'm sure we can find a good home for her at some point," said Chloe.

"Like where?" said Matt.

"I don't know, we'll know when we see it at some point," said Chloe.

"I suppose..." said Matt, before the two turned to see Stoick and the kid and his dragon headed over. "You get the feeling we're about to get in trouble?" said Matt, adding to Chloe, "I kinda was caught letting that dragon out."

Chloe sighed and turned around with her best diplomacy face. "Hi, can we help you?"

"My son tells me you were down at the dragon academy," said Stoick sternly, Matt waving his arm carefully as Xander and his men tensed up, hands reaching under their cloaks.

"Your son? I don't see-" started NegaMorph before Chloe kicked him from behind.

"How anyone can tell you two apart," said Chloe before NegaMorph could say anything else.

"I...erm..." said Matt, again unable to find anything to say that wouldn't drop him in it.

Stoick gave the female Night Fury a look and said, "And it seems your dragon seems to have selected you."

"I noticed," said Matt.

"Well, that all seems well, unless you were planning on stealing her," said Stoick, sounding more serious.

"Stealing her? That's crazy," said Matt with a manic grin.

"Then I suppose it's just a coincidence that Changewing melted the cage she was in," said Stoick.

"The Chan...I mean, yes, that's exactly what happened," said Matt, the grins manicness dialing down while his eyes focused on the kid who was emitting a similar air of innocentness, the sort people who are hiding something give out.

"Well, I can't say I can complain about another Night Fury rider at the Academy," said Stoick.

"Wait, what?" said Matt, snapping back to the present.

"Though you're in sore need of training from what I've heard," said Stoick, "From the sound of it, you can't even ride a horse."

"There is that," muttered Matt darkly.

"Fortunately for you, my son is the leading expert on dragon riding," said Stoick, "He'll have you flying that Night Fury in no time."

"Ooookay," said Matt carefully before his brain said 'Hey, we beat Kurata not much older than him. Go for it'. "Lead the way, boss," he said.

...

As soon as word spread about Matt's new buddy, all the crew gathered at the arena for the show.

"This'll be good...sooooo good!" said Draco quietly an evil grin on all of his mouths.

Matt knew his crew well enough to know what type of moral support he was getting. "Why am I the only one who gets public humiliation?" he griped.

'__Karma__' said Draconus in his head before laughing, causing the kids already in the arena to be treated to their first encounter of a 'Matt moment' in this case, the homicidal giggle.

"Ok, the first part of training a Night Fury is earning its trust," said Hiccup, "Just hold your hand out and let her put her head against it."

Matt looked at the dragon who was grinning with all her teeth in a way that reminded Matt of the experiments every April the 1st. "Are you sure?" he asked cautiously.

"It's all about trust," said Hiccup, "That's the most important part about training dragons."

"Ooookay," said Matt, cautiously reaching forward before, to the group's horror and to someone's laughter in the rafters, the dragoness's mouth snapped forward.

"AAAH!! SHE GOT MY HAND! SHE GOT MY HAND!" yelled Matt before his sleeve fell down and exposed his 'missing' appendage. "Oh wait, there it is," he said. He turned with a grin to see that the muscle-bound one had fainted.

"Ok, maybe now's not a good time for her," said Hiccup.

Matt glared at the dragoness and said quietly "I carry enough weaponry to flatten islands on a good day, play ball."

The dragoness gave a rumbling purr that could probably be contrived as chucking before rubbing her head against Matt's hand.

"See? She's fine," said Matt before another chomp was heard and his smile became a little glassy. "Not joking this time," he rasped.

"Moody one, ain't she?" said Chris to Chloe.

The dragoness seemed to be chewing gently with the same grin before spitting Matt's hand back out. "Do I have to ride her?" said Matt darkly.

"Well, not tonight, just be glad she hasn't given you the fish test," said Hiccup.

"The fish test?" said Matt, confused at the same time as, to the dragons, Kala said _"The fish test?"_

"Sometimes, they spit up a fish they ate and they expect you to take a bite of it," said Hiccup.

"What? Tell me that's a joke," said Matt, turning a little green.

"No, I've done it too, and it wasn't that pleasant," said Hiccup.

Matt gulped before looking at the dragoness who was grinning evilly again before making several growls, which unknowingly translated to, _"If you don't recognize me, it's fish time."_

"Uh, we've already established a solid enough foundation of trust, right?" asked Matt. The dragon simply shook her head before starting

to make retching noises. "No, oh please no," said Matt with horror before she suddenly spat out half a fish. "I really have to?" moaned Matt, wishing he'd brought the medical kit...and the anti-sickness tablets.

"If you don't, it'll really offend her," said Hiccup.

Matt gulped before taking the fish, a head, he noticed and looked at the dragon. "Mercy?" he tried weakly. The dragoness gave a soft growl that had very clear meaning. "I hate you." Matt glared before taking a bite, and despite everything swallowing it, though he immediately went pale.

_ 'Wow, I can't believe he actually did it,' _ thought Kala.

"I can't...can't believe...uuuurghâ€|" began Matt. The dragoness and the kids immediately took several steps back. Matt settled for throwing up. "I know how Tohru feels now," he groaned.

"Well, I'm pretty sure you have her trust now," said Hiccup.

"I'd...better...I'm not doing that again, not even if she bites my leg off," groaned Matt. The dragoness made a disgusted look.

"You could try a ride now if you want." said Hiccup.

Matt just groaned before falling over. "Baaaad fishy," he said in a weird bubbling voice. The dragoness just snorted before kicking some dust over Matt and walking off. "I think she wants me time." groaned Matt, slightly muffled as the 'dust' turned out to be a small mound of dirt that partially covered his head.

"Well, looks like we've got a new pet to take care of," said Chris.

"Yeah, in addition to finding Kala, the other half of the Bladestorm, WARDEN, and..." Chloe paused and said, "I'm forgetting someone..."

...

On a moon not that far away...

"Dis coulda gone better," said Dune Runner, his head in his hands.

The last thing he recalled was the ship being under attack. He was heading for the cargo bay doors when there was an explosion. He must have been in stasis for megacycles. He took in his surroundings, namely white rock and dust. However, he could pick up a few energy signatures, presumably the Constructicons who are probably still in stasis.

"This place is a dump...and there's a giant snake robot head in that crater, boss," said Rollout's on the comm frequency Cybertronians used to talk in vacuums.

"Then get to work on it. That head ought to have something we can use to send an SOS," snapped Dirt Boss's voice, "I ain't waiting for some

space shuttle to show up."

"I don't think there are any space shuttles. Apart from some old Atlantean probes, there's nothing in orbit," said Hightower, distorted a bit as a solar flare shorted the comm for a second.

"Well, I better go meet up with dem," said Dune Runner before shifting to buggy mode and rolling off towards where the signals were coming from.

* * *

><p>There's the first chapter of a new story. And this story will involve the gang dealing with quite a few disadvantages, especially Kala. Not to mention keep their true nature hidden from the Vikings. Roughly speaking, this story takes place before the season 1 finale, mainly so that the gang can torment Mildew. This is going to be a particularly long story so it's not at all hard to imagine that the second season will start airing before this story is over. I'm not certain what effect, if any, it'll have on the story, but there's a lot about the new season we don't know yet. Anyways, this is going to be a two-part upload so the second chapter will be up as well. Read that one as well and review both.<p>

2. Smoke and Mirrors

****Voyagers Saga****

****Broken Nest****

****Chapter 2: Smoke and Mirrors****

Mildew was well-known for his paranoia about dragons, so no one really minded him watching the 'Temple Raiders'. It was probably impolite, but it's not like the old man was a threat. Matt however wasn't enjoying the attention he had received ever since the female Night Fury had started sticking to him like superglue...coupled with Mildew following him.

"Don't you have anything else to do?" snapped Matt.

"Oi...this is my home," said the old man nastily, only for Matt to say "I was talking to Miss Clingy."

He paused for a moment and said, "Come to think of it, don't you have any hobbies, like sucking eggs?"

"Oi!" snapped the old man before noticing Matt's gaze falling on his staff.

"A collector I see," he said in an ice cold tone.

"Got them from many nasty beasties," said Mildew proudly, "Dragons can be such treacherous creatures. I wouldn't be surprised if that was following you around just so she can gobble you up when you're alone."

"Really?" said Matt, in a disbelieving tone.

"Haven't you heard, the Night Fury is the unholy offspring of lightning and Death itself?" said Mildew, "They're as nasty as a dragon can get."

"I met worse," said Matt casually

"Oh sure, you think you've seen it all," said Mildew in a condescending tone.

"Yes actually...including talking pink elephants," said Matt, in a serious sounding voice.

Mildew disregarded Matt's driveling and said, "Ok, but when that Night Fury tears your arm off, don't say I didn't warn you."

"I won't," said Matt casually before saying, "Now go away."

"Now what kind of citizen would I be if I just-" started Mildew before the dragoness suddenly swatted him with her tail and sent him flying.

"I like your style, girl." said Matt, with a smirk. The dragoness gave him a toothless smile. "You know, there's something about that seems familiar," said Matt, "Like someone I've met before."

The dragoness seemed to perk up hopefully at that before a whirring got Matt's attention and he looked up to see a spiderbot. "Just my luck, you guys survived," Matt said darkly.

The spiderbot played a voiceclip of Jumba saying, "-designed to completely indestructible and unstoppable!" followed by his patented evil laugh.

"Bad robot. You bloody will swim to camp...and tell your buddies to do the same. This place is packed full of timeline specifics," said Matt angrily.

Another Jumba clip played, 'Molecular density too great to stay buoyant in water.'

"Then walk along the sea floor, you guys could probably use the bath," said Matt.

The spiderbot's optics narrowed before it fired a net in his face and scuttled off, grumbling.

Matt pulled the net off and muttered, "Stupid wind-up toys." He turned back to the dragoness and said, "I'm sorry, I completely forgot what we were talking about, what was it again?"

The dragoness snarled into the air before pushing past. "What did I say?" asked Matt, befuddled.

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While Matt was dealing with his new dragon buddy, some of the crew decided to do something more productive, namely finding whatever pieces of the Bladestorm fell on the island.

"Ok, we saw the front section break up around this area. There must be parts somewhere," said Techo, looking around the undergrowth. They had already had some luck, the largest bits having set fires. It had been as simple as following the smoke.

Draco was sniffing around for any more bits. The metal smelled distinct from the forest so he's had a little luck with that. "Do we really need to pick up every scrap?" asked Draco, "I mean, those Vikings won't be able to do much with them."

"And if they find a working plasma rifle or particle cannon?" said Techo

"Wouldn't they have melted into slag in reentry?" asked Draco.

"That's worse then. They find a particle cannon with an unstable power source," said Talia.

"This is why we're out here with metal detectors," said Chris, "Besides, the more pieces we can find for the nanoforge, the better equipment we'll have."

"Hey...is this smoke moving against the wind?" said Xander curiously.

The group looked up to see a cloud floating above the trees. "Against the wind? I think it's ignoring the meteorological rule that heat rises," said Techo, noticing that the cloud was starting to descend.

"Erm...the cloud's moving this way," said Talia, nervously as the group all started wishing they'd hidden more than a few las-pistols about their disguises.

"Oh please, it's just smoke. It's not like it's a smoke serpent," said Draco before pausing and asking, "It's not, right?"

"It's moving by itself. I vote smoke serpent," said Techo nervously.

"In that case, I think I better freeze it up," said Draco before blowing ice breath at the smoke cloud. The smoke cloud instead seemed to grow and thin briefly to avoid the ice steam before consuming Draco, various chomping noises heard before the smoke left a dazed Draco behind. "It's not...smoke," he rasped

"Well, that only makes me feel slightly better," said Talia.

"It's also...angry," rasped Draco, pointing a thumb at where the smoke was 'regrouping'.

"Uh, Xander, you think you can zap it or something?" asked Talia.

"Not without a clear target," said Xander, backing up.

By now, the smoke cloud seemed to have fully amassed itself and it suddenly swooped down upon the group.

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Chloe herself was doing what Matt was, and finding things out. "So you only stopped fighting these dragons a year ago?" she asked a girl who had identified herself as Astrid while looking at the old catapult towers, one of which looked capable of downing the North Star with a lucky shot.

"Well, we didn't know then that the dragons were forced to feed a gigantic dragon and had to raid us for more food," said Astrid, "It probably would have gone on forever if it weren't for Hiccup and Toothless."

"Sounds like you had it tough," said Chloe before looking up as Astrid's dragon growled as an old man went by. "That the guy following my brother?" she asked.

"That's Mildew, he's the only one in town who still hates dragons," said Astrid, "Not that he was popular before that."

Chloe went a little bug eyed as she got a whiff. "I can see why. I hate cabbage," she said weakly.

"Well that and he's always complaining," said Astrid.

"True...how long do you think before he complains about us because of our name?" asked Chloe curiously before she tensed up, spotting a spiderbot following Mildew along the roof.

"What? Lynch? That's hardly the worst names around here," said Astrid.

"I dunno...we tend to attract trouble," said Chloe, watching the spiderbot seemingly lay in wait on the roof ahead of Mildew.

"Trouble's a frequent visitor here," said Astrid.

"Oh they're only stalking at the moment," said Chloe absently.

"What?" asked Astrid.

"Oh, nothing," said Chloe with a smile as there was a 'clunk' and splashing noise as a bucket of water strangely landed on Mildew's head.

"So, I bet you guys have dozens of stories about the temples you've raided," said Astrid.

"It doesn't mean temples, temporal, as in time...oh, it's a long story," said Chloe before a beep was heard.

"What-"

"Why don't you go along and play, it's a beautiful day," said Chloe before ducking into an alley. She activated her comm and said, "What is it?"

"Stitch found something interesting back at camp: an airlock in the

ground, been left open and was iced over," said Chip's voice.

"Does it go anywhere?" asked Chloe.

"We dunno...looks pretty old. Definitely our tech, but none of the access codes work...looks real old," said Chip.

"Any idea of how long it's been there?" asked Chloe.

"Real old...we haven't sent in teams yet," said Chip.

"What's going on here?" called Mildew's voice.

"Gottago," rushed Chloe, managing to turn her wrist comp off just as Mildew came into view...had he seen it? "What do you want?" she said coldly.

"For one thing, the hide of whatever miscreant dropped that bucket on me," said Mildew, "For another, who were you talking to?"

"Nobody," said Chloe innocently.

"Ain't nobody named 'Nobody' around here," said Mildew accusingly.

"Tough. I was talking to myself, Mildew. I've heard you talking to a sheep so you can't talk," Chloe said, equally accusingly

"Fungus is a very intelligent creature, much cleverer than some of the people around here," said Mildew defensively.

"He's a sheep. They have small brains. Dragons however...I've met ones that make most scientists seem like rocks," said Chloe, coldly.

"Fine, babble all you want, it only proves that the lot of you are plum crazy," said Mildew before stomping off.

"Bye, Lord Mutton," taunted Chloe

Apparently, Chloe's comm wasn't as off as she thought it was because she heard Chip's voice say, "Did we forget the general rule about talking about the future to the locals in the past?"

"He's a grouchy old man and registers as a villain in timeline specific. He's fair game," said Chloe happily.

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Xander peered out from behind an overturned tree, his helmet, fake sword and blaster all gone. Talia, sporting a black eye, peered up beside him, in a similar situation of no gear. "Ok...so we're alive...that's a good point," she said.

Chris, who had several scratches on his face, peered up and said, "How are we going to be able to tell the others we were mugged by a cloud?"

"Or how that same cloud made off with Techo?" said Draco.

"Matt'll murder us," said Talia simply

"If he's able to think straight after all those crashes," said Chris.

"He will, we're not that lucky," said Talia simply.

"Well, Techo won't be that hard to track. I bet he left a strong scent," said Draco before sniffing around.

"Just when the spiderbots would come in useful too," said Chris darkly.

"I think we can handle smog without the spiderbots," said Talia.

"You sure? They stole Xander's holocloak and that's locked on," said Chris, pointing to where Xander's form was flickering

"Which is why we can't run back and get them," said Talia, sounding annoyed.

Chris muttered "We could send Draco solo..." only for Draco to call "Found him."

"Can you tell where they're going?" asked Xander.

"Yes, just follow the scent of smoke, lubricant, and copious sweat," said Draco.

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Meanwhile, Matt had slipped away from town again, this time with a high powered blaster concealed about his person...and with his 'pet dragon' in tow. "Look, please stop, I can't take you with me when we leave," he said. The dragon made a desperate-sounding growl before pushing up against Matt.

"Oh great...now I know how Spyro felt," muttered Matt, before looking at his scanner and the multiple dots that represented the alloy the Bladestorm had used. "We were probably directly over this island when we were attacked," commented Matt, "There are a lot of pieces to pick up.

The dragon suddenly stopped before grabbing Matt's sleeve and yanking. "What? Oh, what now?" snapped Matt. Suddenly, she flipped Matt up onto her back and started running.

"And now I'm being kidnapped." muttered Matt darkly as the dragoness took him to a depression in the ground, a small pool at the bottom...but that wasn't what got Matt's attention, it was what was sticking out of it.

"An escape pod?" he said before quickly climbing off the dragon's back and heading down into the crater to get a better look at the markings on its sides. "Kala's," muttered Matt, reading the NSC code on the side before looking up to see the dragoness using a branch to make an arrow pointing from the pod before standing in front of it.

Matt looked at the arrow for a few seconds before realizing what it meant. "An arrow indicating where Kala went after she crashed," he said. He patted the dragon on the head and said, "Thanks, girl," before walking in the direction the arrow indicated.

Kala stared for a second before screaming `"SMEG!"` She smacked a paw against her forehead and grumbled, `"I forgot how terrible he is at guessing games."`

Kala then looked along to see Matt had found something. Matt looked closely at the inactive ion staff and said, "Odd, why would Kala have dropped her ion staff? I wonder..." He turned to Kala and asked, "Hey, can you pick up her scent with this?"

The dragoness stared before its eyes narrowed, rolling them before sniffing them, then going over to the lake and making pointing motions at her reflection.

"Ah, she went for a swim after the crash," said Matt, "I suppose she would have wanted to get clean. Unless...she was being chased by someone and she went there to lost her scent."

The dragoness glared, grabbing Matt by the arm and throwing him into the lake before walking off to the other side of the pit.

Matt got back to the shore and asked, "What was that for?" The dragoness suddenly tensed up and began growling. "What? What now?" asked Matt.

There were several clicks. "Well, well, well, Captain Lynch, all alone," said a helmet filtered voice behind Matt.

Matt sighed before saying, "Ok, who am I roughing up today?"

"That depends, you want your girlfriend back in one piece or not?" said another of the troopers, Matt finally turning to see three of them on the rim of the pit above.

"What have you done with her?" demanded Matt, all humor dropping from his voice.

"Wouldn't you like to know? Kill us, come after us...you'll never find her," said another of the troopers, taking HER helmet off to reveal her face. "Maybe next time you'll keep your little flamethrower in check."

Matt knew that face. The person behind the mask was a black-haired African human though her eyes looked wrong. Now he knew he wasn't dealing with NSC troopers, these were marauders. And not just any marauders. That face had been on some impressive wanted posters and made quite a few appearances on news broadcasts regarding rather heinous crimes.

The marauder seemed to sense what he was thinking. "Privateers, we get you, we all get pardons. Isn't that nice?" she said, cheerfully as if they were old friends.

"'Nice' isn't the word I'd use, especially around you," said Matt.

"Well, that's a shame. Now, I've had a bad day. We were dragged into supplementing Mr. McNeil's boarding action...and now we're stuck in the pre-bog roll era. So I'm gonna go relax, but I'm going to leave you with my two friends. Oh and if you survive, you come within a mile of our camp and I'll mail you your dear love's head," said the marauder, grinning coldly before saying "Alicia...remember the name." before she walked off, her two companions jumping down into the pit and shifting to splitter forms, pulling out concussion staffs.

"You guys just pushed the wrong buttons," said Matt, shifting his right arm to dragon mode.

The splitters looked at each other and pulled out firearms instead. "Oh crap!" yelled Mat, diving back into the lake as the duo opened fire.

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They followed the scent until they heard something up ahead. Careful listening revealed it to be someone swearing loudly in Splitter. The group peered around to see Techo hanging from a tree. "Ah, the laughing hyenas have arrived. Get me down!" he snapped as he spotted the others.

Talia smirked and said, "Don't tell me you can't get down all by yourself."

"They fried my cyber arm's systems and left me holding a branch...little scaly gits," snapped Techo angrily.

"What little scaly gits?" asked Chris.

"The ones in the cloud...was full of little scaly smokestacks. Little arseholes almost took me arm off getting my wrist comp..." snapped Techo, lifting up his arm and adding triumphantly "...which they failed to get."

"Dragons, I might have known," said Talia before saying to Xander, "You think you can get him down?" Xander grinned before grabbing the tree and shaking it hard. A second later Techo landed on his head, followed by a shower of several disks which sprouted legs.

"Well what do you know, a spiderbot tree," said Draco. On cue the 'disks' all turned to look at Draco, revealing several scorch and scratches on them, one even missing half a leg. "I guess those dragons must have tried to nab you too," said Draco.

One of the spiderbots jumped up and down, gibbering angrily before waving to its fellows who proceeded to kick their tree till a hogtied lizard also fell down, tied up with old cabling.

Chris looked at the 'lizard' and could clearly see it was a dragon. It was smoky blue-grey with a round froglike body, curved spikes down its spines, and a wide smoking mouth. It was about the size of a Terrible Terror, which would explain how many could fit into a cloud. "Hey Techo, that identifying thing still work on your wristcomp?" he asked.

Techo typed it in and was surprised to see a very old file header appear. "Hey, these guys were spotted before the NSC," he said,

cheerfully, pointing to the header 'H.L.A' before reading it "Apparently these guys love metal...to the point that they stripped a shuttle down to its struts in under half an hour...fun," he said mock cheerful.

"Kinda guessed that," said Talia, "Does it say what they use all that metal for?"

"They sent a team to find out once...team never came back," said Techo, looking at the angry little dragon that seemed to be saying with its eyes 'Just you wait'.

"Well, I don't know about you guys, but I want my stuff back," said Chris, "Think we can find out where these little guys roost?"

"Let's cut the guy loose and follow him. If they work as a team they probably live as one too," said Techo, glaring at the dragon who returned the glare.

"I don't know. Something tells me it won't fly right back to its nest," said Draco.

"Oh, it will if it knows what's good for it," said Techo with a certain amount of evil relish. One of the spiderbots unfolded what looked to be a nailgun to emphasize it. The dragon glared as some of the other bots untied it before, with one final look, it flew for the treeline. Draco immediately took off after it. "After that smokebomb!" yelled Techo.

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Fortunately, as anyone knows, water disrupts the straightness of light that passes through it so objects aren't exactly where they seem to be. But the splitters had more than enough ammo to spend. The other more serious problem was that the blasts were heating the water up fast. _'Thermite plasma? Oh goody, I get to get cooked'_ thought Matt _'Bet that dragons legged it'_ before one of the splitters fell in the water with him, a nasty burn mark in his chest before dissolving to dust as all splitters did when they died. That intrigued Matt's interest enough to make him want to surface. Not to mention he couldn't hold his breath very long underwater.

He surfaced to see the other splitter firing at something in the air. "What the smeg?" muttered Matt before hearing what sounded like a Starfury in a dive before a blue blast shot from above, sending the second splitter flying. Matt looked up to see the dragoness bank back up. However, the splitter was not out and sent several blasts upwards. They didn't hit the dragoness, but they forced her to land to keep her wings from being damaged.

"Stupid primitive dragon," snarled the splitter, throwing more lightning bolts while inching back towards his blaster. The dragoness was forced to dodge, unable to get close enough and the splitter was not falling for another blast, refusing to stay still long enough for a disabling shot. Eventually, the splitter managed to grab his blaster and aimed it at the dragoness. "Die, beast," he snarled.

The dragoness yelped before there was a deafening boom and a decent sized hole appeared in the splitters chest, a golf ball sized hole appearing through a rock next to his victim before there was several

more booms until the mangled splitter disintegrated, revealing Matt holding the other marauder's blaster. "No one hurts my dragon," said Matt.

The Night Fury made a happy sound before glomping Matt. "Gah, ok, it's nice to see you too, you kicked arse. Even Spyro was shocked by Xander first time," said Matt, pushing the dragon away as she tried to lick him before the dragon jumped back. Matt noticed her making a gaking sound and said, "Hey, I'm not doing that fish thing again, I don't care if you'll blast me."

"Oh blitznak...he tastes like compost casserole...when I turn back, I'm locking him in decon,"_ Kala groaned, licking a rock to try and lose the taste.

Matt sighed. "You're gonna need a name for now..." he muttered. The dragoness looked up, looking interested. "How about...Starflame...you hit like a damn Starfury and you're a Night Fury. It suits you," Matt muttered.

Kala stared. "_Really? That's the best you can come up with?"_ she thought.

"Well, you're not blasting me, so I'm guessing you have no objections," said Matt, "Starflame it is." Starflame glared before muttering something in dragonese.

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Eventually, the dragon led to a cliff at the far end of the island. The sea-facing cave wasn't easy for humans to climb up to, but the cliff was craggy enough to them to climb down from the top to near the entrance.

The smoke coming out was clear enough as the source of the dragons. "Ok, Draco, you go first. These guys are probably related, try talking to them," said Techo.

Draco gave him an annoyed glare and said, "I think that might be considered discriminatingly offensive."

Techo glared "I've been smoked, hung upside down from a tree, try my patience a little more," he snapped.

"Ok, ok, fine," said Draco before flying over.

Techo sat back before opening the old file again and reading further. "Oh, lifeforms noted to be territorial to the point of xenophobic...oh," he said slowly. There was growling noises before a lot of snapping and Draco yelping in pain. "Aaaand there it is," muttered Techo before Draco scrambled back up at record speed.

Draco, who was now covered with several bite marks, said, "Those guys...are not friendly."

"Yeah...so did you see any of our stuff?" said Chris, before there was a painful sounding noise from below and one of the dragons shot out, managing to right itself before heading back in.

"They've got some of the bots," said Draco casually.

"Well, that ought to keep them occupied," said Talia, "Did you see what they were doing with that metal?"

"It looked like they were melding it together into one big wall," said Draco, "Pretty good defense, you have to admit."

"Why would they build a wall? That makes no sense," complained Techo before stopping. "They were gonna put me in a wall?" he yelped.

"Only the important part of you," said Xander, tapping Techo's arm, "The rest of you would probably be used to feed their hatchlings." Techo froze at that, Xander, after a minute, tapping Techo's forehead to no reaction. "Yup, he's having a terror attack," he said calmly, before grabbing Techo and walking over to a boulder, which Techo was propped against.

"You know, for all that metal, there doesn't seem to be a whole lot of them," said Talia, "Maybe 12 at the most."

"They're probably a fledgling colony, newly arrived to this island," said Xander, "Like how bees send away some of their own to start a new hive when the old one gets too full."

"We need to make 'em move, before they decide to raid this island," said Chris, before looking at Draco again, this time with an idea.

"Hey, I'm not going back there again," protested Draco.

"Tough, no choice in the matter," said Xander, reaching for his armor under his suit.

"Besides, you saw what they did the last time. I doubt they'll be any more welcome to me coming in again," said Draco.

Xander had pulled out what looked like a badge from his belt, the others all suddenly scrambling away from Draco. "Did I ever tell you what my job was before I met Mr. Lynch?" said Xander calmly pushing a few of the runes on the 'badge' causing it to start to hum.

"Uh, no, not really," said Draco.

"I worked in the Splitter imperial army. I still have some souvenirs from before the empire fell...like this one," said Xander, tossing the badge at Draco's head.

"What's that?" asked Draco before the badge hit his head.

"Well, it's less of a hologuise then a temporary mutagen. I keyed it to the smokers. Have fun," said Xander, kicking Draco over the edge.

Draco yelped before there was a sudden flash of light. When he flew back up, he was nearly identical to the smoker dragons except for the badge on his head. He growled something which was probably supposed to be rude at them. "Just get down there and convince the little fire hazards to go," said Xander. Draco hissed before flying to the

cave.

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The Smothering Smokebreaths had collected a lot of metal to be smelted together. However, they were having some trouble with the newer stuff, which didn't seem to be melting even with their combined flames. It also didn't help that this new 'living' metal was throwing the older stuff at them...and sometimes their own kind if they got too close.

"This new stuff isn't that great," said one of the Smokebreaths.

"Hey, if we can get it to melt into place, we'll have the ultimate defense," said another.

On cue, a bent sword concussed the second dragon, the first one faceclawing. "Urgh...that's if we can get close enough," it muttered, looking up to see the latest attempt's dragon being bounced off the wall a few times before being thrown out the cave, the metal disk that had done it blowing a raspberry before scuttling back to cover.

Just then, a new dragon flew into the cave. "Hey, do you know that guy?" asked one Smokebreath.

"Maybe he's from the old flock," said another.

"He's a bit late...hmm...ow...right, he's next up...HEY, NEW GUY!" said the first, yelping as another piece of metal bounced off his head.

The new dragon spun around before asking, "Who, me?"

"Yes, you, you're next up. Weld those damn spider...disk things," said the first Smokebreath, who was also the alpha of the flock

"Uh...don't you think those things are more hassle than they're worth?" asked the new dragon.

"No...these will be the ultimate deterrence against egg thieves," said the leader, before pointing at the pile, a spiderbot peering out angrily and making the classic throat slitting motion at the new dragon who whimpered "Mummy."

"You know, I'm not so sure this cave is that secure," said the new dragon, "Come to think of it, I saw a cave on another island that looks a lot better." The other dragons however pointed dully, the new guy looking down to see a grapple around his leg. "Oh no," he moaned before being shot back behind the pile.

The dragons winced as they heard the sound of thrashing and the new guy screaming, "Hey, ow, stop, wait a, ow, I'm on your OH GOD NOT THA-" There was a sudden explosion followed by the recorded sound of someone laughing manically.

There was also a rising hum. "They're gonna do the light trick! DUCK AND COVER!" yelled one Smokebreath before a red blast shot out of the

pile and out the hole. "Well, scratch one new...whoa," said another, the new dragon staggering out covered in soot.

"Twinkle twinkle little staaaaarâ€|" gibbered the new guy.

"New guy's tougher than he looks," said one of the Smokebreaths.

"I'm...scorrrrrched," rasped the new guy, coughing up quite alot of smoke before falling face down on the floor.

"Well, I guess you can rest before trying again," said the alpha.

The new dragon gave him an incredulous look and said, "Again?" He quickly sprang into the air and flew out yelling "I QUIT!" There was another flash at that and a crack of thunder and the new guy came back in even more scorched. "Changed my mind," he rasped, muttering something about a 'Xander'.

"So, you ready for another round in there?" asked the alpha, gesturing to the scrap pile.

"No...please no," moaned the newcomer.

"C'mon, we've all had our share," said one of the Smokebreaths, who had several bruises. His companion would have added something, but he still had that large piece of ship's hull wedged in his mouth.

"Aw blitznak," moaned the newcomer, slowly heading towards the barricade before being dragged over it. "Can't we discuss this like rational beings?" asked the newcomer's voice before the mauling began.

"I kinda feel sorry for him," said one of the other Smokebreaths before the newcomer was thrown out the cave again.

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The four of them watch as Draco was chucked back up there. "Ok, one minute break and its back into the fray," said Chris. Draco glared before breathing a large amount of smoke into his face.

"Hey, you're the only one who can get close, ok?" said Talia before saying chirpily "Time's up." and kicking Draco back over the edge.

Chris coughed as he waved the last of the smoke away from his face. "Are we actually expecting him to be able to get anything done?" he asked.

"Not really, but I'm sick of him whining about the weather," said Xander calmly.

"How long should we keep him at it before we send the real marines in?" asked Techo, looking at the spiderbots besides him.

"I think once more," said Xander

"That should take, oh, about five minutes," said Talia.

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As it was it was about to take longer, as the last blow had damaged the bio cloak on Draco's head. The Smokebreaths first got suspicious when the newcomer started flickering and seemed a little green. "Hey...are you ok?" asked one of them, peering closely at the newcomer.

"No, I'm being thrashed by metal monsters a tenth of my size," grumbled the newcomer.

"I ask cause...you're turning green," said the same Smokebreath

"What? Green? I thought I was just hit too hard on the head," said the newcomer, starting to sound worried.

"Hey, you're starting to smell wrong..." said the Smokebreath before a spiderbot peered out.

"Buddy," chirped the spiderbot. The Smokebreaths gave the spiderbot an odd look.

"Careful, he's trying to catch you offguard," said the newcomer before noticing he had a claw at the end of the tail and quickly hiding it behind him.

"Fine, keep an eye out..." said the alpha, nobody hearing the muffled noises of the spiderbots making sure silence was golden.

However, the odd spot on the newcomer's forehead had started sparking. "What's that on your head?" asked one of the Smokebreaths.

"I can explain..." started the newcomer before a final shower of sparks came out and the newcomer warped into a completely different type of dragon. "Oh blitznak," said Draco. One of the spiderbots held up a note to the Smokebreaths that said, 'Yes, stupid, it's an intruder.'

The Smokebreaths turned back to look at Draco before all starting to snarl as one, the translator going bust along with the bio-cloaker. "Uh, guys, we can talk this out..." started Draco.

The spiderbots luckily stopped anything developing, deciding to jump in on things...in this case, on the Smokebreaths.

Draco quickly flew out of the cave and back to the others. "Ok, diplomacy's officially a bust," he said, "Let's try something else now."

"Hey, maybe the spiderbots will solve it...oh no...but fast, I'll give 'em that," said Techo gloomily to where one of the Smokebreaths had flown up, a spiderbot perched on its head.

The spiderbot handed Techo a rolled-up scroll with an official-looking seal on it. "What's it say?" asked Chris, as Techo unrolled it.

__This document is a written representation of the treaty between the Berk Colony of Smothering Smokebreaths and the Spiderbots of the former NSC Bladestorm. Destroying this document won't change a thing except to warrant you several burns and zaps for destruction of a legal document.__

__In exchange the Smokebreaths for __collecting the scattered metal fragments of the Bladestorm__, __not looting the village of Berk__, and __rider services__, the Spiderbots shall provide __protection for the nest and hatchlings__, __help build up the defense walls__, and __serve as a mediatory correspondence between the Smokebreaths and the crew of the Bladestorm__.__

__The crew shall be provided scrap metal from the Bladestorm in exchange __for keeping the location of the Smokebreath colony a secret__. Should the crew attempt to break the agreement, the Smokebreath/Spiderbot alliance shall engage war upon the crew until apologies and a tribute is given.__

"I don't believe it. You did that in the space of a minute?" said Chris, Techo turning the scroll over to see written 'we're fast writers and they're fast readers'.

"Did they say 'rider services'?" asked Talia.

"Yes they did...they even underlined it," said Techo.

Suddenly, the Smokebreaths flew out of the cave in a diamond formation, each with a spiderbot riding on its back.

"The boss is gonna kill us dead," said Techo simply.

...

"Marauders? They fleshed out the NSC boarding teams with Marauders?" hissed Chloe. Matt, followed by Starflame had explained his little misadventure in details.

"Not just any marauders. That was Alicia, I've seen more than a few wanted posters of her," said Matt.

"And I bet that big snake thing was all standing between them and looting this planet," said Chloe, sounding worried.

"She's a small clan, plus she said that if she killed us, she and her men got pardons. So I doubt she'll risk messing that up by going loot nuts," said Matt, though both realized that was hardly reassuring.

"And she said that they have Kala?" asked Chloe.

"Apparently so...I'm not so sure...but I'm not gonna risk it. So we're defensive only till she's back," said Matt.

Starflame apparently said something in dragonese, but it wasn't very clear. "Well, I suppose we have a new pet," said Chloe, "At least she's a smart one." She reached around Starflame's head and started rubbing her behind her ear.

Kala glared. _"Oh here we go aga-ooooh...niiice,"_ she said, falling over as the sweet spot was hit. As inconvenient as it was to be unable to communicate, at least she was certain Matt wasn't leaving her soon.

Just then, the scent of smoke caught everyone's attention. They turned to see Techo's team had return and looked and smelled more than a little sooty. "Techo, you know I don't approve of smoking," said Matt in a half-serious tone.

"Deal with it until laundry day," said Techo, "The spiderbots are taking care of the rest of the Bladestorm pieces. That's all you want to know."

Matt and Chloe exchanged glances before Chloe said, "Where the spiderbots are concerned, I think we're better off not knowing."

Matt shrugged and said, "So long as the metal stays out of the wrong hands, I don't care."

* * *

><p>And there's the second half of this two-fold upload. Matt and Kala's relationship is going to have some very rough development, especially since Kala will be having a near-impossible time of trying to tell Matt who she really is. And of course, the marauders here are going to be causing a lot of trouble for the gang throughout this story. The Smothering Smokebreaths are an extension from the flock that live on Breakneck Bog, but they're not going to cause as much trouble. But 'trouble' is a bit up to debate where the spiderbots are involved. They'll probably be having a sporadic appearance throughout this story. Today's upload was a premiere two-part opening, the rest of the chapters are going to be uploaded weekly one at a time. So keep an eye out for next week's chapter and please review.<p>

3. In the Living Room of the Mountain King

****Voyagers Saga****

****Broken Nest****

****Chapter 3: In the Living Room of the Mountain King****

The camp, in the week since both settling in and finding out their island wasn't a normal one, had become a hive of activity, troopers using modified laser rifles to dig through to the hatch under the ice, Matt helping by sending low level plasma blasts down to vaporize the ice and dry the inside and finally, it had paid off. The first few levels were open and Chip had, in a rare removal from the North Star, had worked on getting the base back up, at least as far as power and heating went.

The real prize had been found by Techo. "It's a Hyperion class battlecruiser, nickname the 'Hammerhead mobile base'. This baby's ancient...and it's our ticket outta here," he said cheerfully to Chloe and Matt, the trio standing in the huge hanger where the ship hung from the ceiling on clamps.

"Yes, it is...after a severely need tune-up," said Chip over the comm system, "This thing has been frozen for centuries. I'd be surprised if you can get any lights to turn on."

"He's right. My boys checked it out. Every relay's frozen or fried. Just as well this base has nanoforges. We can replicate the parts...but it'll take a while," said Techo, his cheerfulness vanishing.

Matt sighed. "How long?" he asked.

"Month or two if you're lucky...less if we can bring all the base systems up," Techo replied.

Chloe sighed, "That's all we need. Some of us are already getting twitchy from their first survival situation."

...

"Ma'cherie, please," said Gary desperately, "Our conditions cannot be helped...at least this old base will allow us to live in some comfort."

"In the middle of an iceberg?!" snapped Megan, "Can you really expect us to live in a giant meat locker?"

"It is apparently fake ice under the snow, camouflage. Where else could we go? Paris is not even built yet," said Gary, trying logic.

"Rome's the most advanced city in the world, right now. It's probably a lot better than this backwater archipelago," said Megan.

"Yes...but all we will end up as slaves if we go there. I could not forgive myself if something happened to you," said Gary.

"Maybe you'll end up a slave with the amount of ambition you have," snapped Megan, "But I could rise up a lot higher than that."

Gary stopped at that, a hurt expression on his face. "Ma'cherie?" he said faintly.

Just then, Matt walked outside and said, "Good news, we've got the refrigerator running. Admittedly, it's a bit redundant here." He stopped as he saw Megan's expression. "I'm presuming you're the problem I was told about. Megan, we can't help this and nobody leaves the base alone. Why not come to Berk? I gotta train with Starflame after all."

"Berk? The only place that's more desolate than that little place would be right here. There is nothing to do over there," said Megan.

"MEGAN!" roared Matt, shifting to dragon hybrid at that, "I will NOT have you acting like this. We're in this together. So act like it."

Megan grumbled before saying, "Fine, whatever."

"What was that?" said Matt, glaring.

"Sorry...fine, whatever, SIR!" said Megan sarcastically before stomping off.

"I don't understand what has gotten into her," said Gary, "She's never been this unhappy about where she stays."

"She's a townie, probably never left a city before she met us...was the same for me. She'll get over it," said Matt.

"I don't know, she seemed pretty upset," said Gary.

"Gary, if there's one thing I know about women, they like to make mountains out of molehills and the only way to make them see reason is to wait for them to settle down," said NegaMorph who was passing by.

Matt stopped at that before stopping NegaMorph dead. "That's the worst advice I have ever heard. I warned you what would happen if you kept trying to sabotage Megan and Gary..." said Matt darkly before making NegaMorph shoot off into the air at high speed, releasing him...but not before freezing his wings. Matt turned to Gary and said, "Megan will be fine when she adjusts. A girl can't just dump a guy because he can't change where he lives."

There was a crash behind them as Nega landed at speed, a groan coming from the new hole. "You are right...maybe both of you. She needs time to think...and I doubt anything I say will help," Gary said.

"Not like you can get any expensive gifts to help her calm down any faster around here," said NegaMorph. Matt glared before flattening NegaMorph again. "I really...was trying to...help," came the rasp.

Gary however was being thoughtful. "I would like to come to Berk with you when you head back," he said suddenly.

"Good idea, mingle with kids your age, keeps you from going stir crazy," said Matt.

"...and maybe find something to take Megan's mind off this situation," said Gary thoughtfully.

...

The ship slowly sailed back towards Berks dock, Matt looking at Gary, Megan, NegaMorph and Contrinus, Draco back at base taking advantage of the rebooted heating. "Ok, non-humans, no talking in front of the Vikings. Everyone else, human forms, no matter what," he said.

"Oh, so I'm supposed to keep quiet while you get to shoot your mouth off?" said NegaMorph.

"Considering your voice makes little kids cry, yes," said Matt.

"I hate you," muttered NegaMorph before a wrist collar landed at his feet.

"Hologuise keyed for the Viking look, don't waste it," said

Matt.

NegaMorph put on the cloak, which made him look like a short ugly Viking. "So, what do people around here do for fun?" he asked.

Matt pressed a button and NegaMorph's look shimmered into a more human form. "From what I understand, up till a year ago, their idea of fun was killing dragons." said Matt sarcastically.

There was a happy roar before a black blur suddenly barreled into Matt, sending him flying out into the harbor. The group simply sweatdropped as Matt's pet dragoness peered over the side just as a splash and a rather final sounding 'snap' was heard before a burp followed.

"Isn't that the same sea dragon from yesterday?" asked Gary.

"I think so," said NegaMorph out of interest before there was a 'ptyui' and Matt was sent back skyward, Starflame taking off and catching him on her back.

"I wonder if the computer has any information on that type of dragon," said NegaMorph, holding Matt's wrist comp out towards the large dragon swimming in the harbor.

"Status: Unknown aquatic...weapon of choice...ingested superheated H2O...advice...avoid," said the limited file.

"So, that thing spits out hot water?" asked Megan.

"Aye, that's what Scauldrons do best," said Gobber, who had somehow appeared behind them.

The trio practically jumped a mile up, having not noticed that the rest of the crew had docked up. "Erm...how long were you there?" said Gary innocently.

"I saw Starflame tacklin' Matt into the harbor, figured there'd be something to watch," said Gobber, "It gets a little dull around here now that the dragon war's over. It's not like the trolls come knockin' and askin' for a fight."

"Trolls? Seriously?" said Matt, jumping down from the hovering Starflame who, with a happy roar, flew back towards the academy.

"Aye, they're tricky creatures that only come out at night since the sun will turn them to stone," said Gobber, "They've been known to steal away humans to take down below. They also steal socks, but only the left ones, I don't know why."

"Are you pulling our legs?" said Megan curiously.

"I most certainly am not. Trolls are very real, just not as much trouble as dragons were so no one pays much attention," said Gobber, "I suppose it's lucky we have the dragons on our side now or they may want to take the whole village."

"Ooooookay." said Matt carefully before saying "I have to go learn how to fall off my dragon." before running off up the dock.

Megan looked around "What a dump," she muttered under her breath

"It's the third century, what would you expect?" whispered NegaMorph. Megan just walked up onto the docks, NegaMorph seeing Gary talking to Gobber. A little while later, Gary walked back, looking a little nauseous. "What were you talking to him about?" asked NegaMorph.

"I asked for some suggestions on a good gift for Megan," said Gary, "He gave some...attention-grabbing ideas, but I'm definitely sure she wouldn't like them."

"Weapons?" said NegaMorph dully.

Gary nodding and saying weakly "Weapons." before Gary looked thoughtful and started heading for the forest. "I'll see you in a few minutes," he said.

"Watch out for trolls," NegaMorph called teasingly before saying, "Actually, it'll be those Terrible Terrors you need to watch for. They're known to mob for snacks."

...

Matt and Starflame came back later, Matt covered in cuts and bruises from a disastrous high speed flying lesson with Hiccup. "Tell me again, how long did it take you to get the hang of it?" asked Matt

"A couple of days," said Hiccup, "Of course, I had to figure out how to make his tail fin just right and I had to practice in secret."

He soon spotted where Megan and Gary was, given that their location was somewhat darker than the area around them, like someone casting a big shadow. Megan was clutching her head and yelling at Gary who was holding a small bouquet of sunshine yellow flowers.

Matt gulped, recognizing the breed. "Starstream daisies...baaaad move. Megan, calm down," he called, running over with Starflame, Hiccup and Toothless just behind and round the corner.

"Calm down? This stupid clod just shoved a handful of those stupid flowers into my face!" snapped Megan, her eyes glowing red.

"Megan...Hiccup's 5 seconds away...stow the mojo," hissed Matt angrily.

Megan took a very deep breath and the light grew brighter. Her eyes stopped glowing, but she was still looking miffed.

On cue, Hiccup came round the corner, though Toothless had arrived early and was staring.

...

"Told you that they weren't Vikings," said Kala smugly.

"Apparently," said Toothless, _"What are they?"_

"We're from space," said Kala, proudly.

...

Matt, Gary and Megan were grinning as Hiccup walked back off, Toothless aiming a suspicious glare over his shoulder at them before Matt span on Megan. "That is it, young lady. You are going back to base via NegaMorph's portal till you calm down," he snapped

Megan gave Matt five angry glaring red eyes and said, "I'd like to see you try."

Matt glared. "I won't...but he will," said Matt, pointing up to where a spiderbot was on the roof.

Megan glanced up before saying, "Only if it can catch me." Suddenly, she seemed to disappear but then Matt felt something shove against him.

Matt was sent sprawling before he clicked down his thermal vision in time to see a Megan-shaped silhouette vanish round a corner. "Spiderbots...find her," he muttered into his comm.

...

After running for about 10 minutes, Megan felt her migraine fade along with a good amount of her crankiness. However, she was still mad at Gary before trying to give her starstream daisies. Didn't he know how much they bothered dark users like her? A second thought pointed out that she had never told him about her 'special needs' as a dark user but her rage silenced that adding how Matt had unfairly ganged up on her.

"I don't need him telling me what to do," grumbled Megan as she shifted into her Lady NegaMorph form, "I can stand on my own."

A recorded voice say "We want you." a snippet from a NSC army recruiter video and Megan turned to see several spiderbots crawling out.

"If you think you can drag me back there, you have another thing coming," said Megan as her hair tentacles started writing up like snakes.

"There's safety in numbers," said another, utilizing a clip from a training video. Suddenly, they paused and started turning this way and that as if they were trying to find something.

Megan stopped at that as spiderbots, also known as 'oh god, not the face' to many people, never paused. A third used a clip from a film of 'They're coming out of the walls' as several stocky creatures came into view, using the shade to avoid the sun shining through the canopy.

"Oh, very fun. I guess you guys overheard Gobber's story too," said Megan.

"Nobody knows...any stories," said one spiderbot, using a mix of

snippets before they folded out their weaponry.

"What are teeny things?" asked one of the creatures in a very thick voice.

"Not important, she ez," said another.

One of the spiderbots chose did another mix 'Hey, shorty...get...lost or...we will...EXTERMINATE!' finishing with a snippet from Dr. Who.

"Beetles not scary," said another creature, "Beetles make yummy snacks."

The spiderbots immediately began repeating the 'EXTERMINATE' soundbite before scuttling at the new creatures, Megan wincing as the first few victims found out that spiderbots disagreed with you.

"Maybe I should go somewhere else now," said Megan before spreading her wings and taking off. She flew until she was out of sight, landing...and being hit by a bola. The bola was well-aimed and snared her wings, keeping her from flying off again. She decided to get away the old fashioned way: running.

"We catch joooo...owie!" came a cry from behind, the 'owie' happening with the classic 'whee' of a lunging spiderbot.

Megan kept running as fast as she could. She glanced over her shoulder to check behind her when she ran into something. She screamed until she saw it was Gary. "Megan, I was just trying to find you so I can apologize..." said Gary before noticing her snared wings, "Uh, what's going on?"

"Trolls...Gobber...sock...left one...spiderbots...EEP!" gibbered Megan, out of breath before eeping as more trolls came into view.

Gary would have question what she just said but then he saw the trolls coming. He placed himself in front of Megan and shouted at the trolls, "Back off!"

The trolls stopped before all laughing with 'hur hur hur' noises.

"Leetle human ez making funny joke," said one troll.

"Me have stick thicker than hez puny arms," said another troll.

Gary glared before saying, "I'm not stick, I'm stone." He changed into his gargoye form and roared at the trolls.

The trolls simply watched. They'd encountered far scarier things, a distant 'whee' indicating one was close by. "Yu no scary, stoney person," said another.

Gary growled and made his eyes flash white. "You're not getting Megan without going through me first."

"Ha, mine cat vuld put up better fight," said a troll.

Gary snapped at that, lunging...and being swatted into a rock and knocked out. "Gee, thanks a lot, Gary," said Megan sarcastically. However, before she could go pick him up, another bola suddenly flew out and wrapped around her legs.

"Ve haz prize...ve now vun before angree metal bugs get us," said the leader.

Megan tried to get her legs untied but the trolls quickly swarmed over her, binding her arms and stuffing gags into her mouths. The metallic sound of the approaching spiderbots could be heard, confirmed when what sounded like a cavalry bugle was heard, though the fighting noises quickly got quieter.

"Quick, pick her up and get moving. No, put hands under-" said one troll before one of the trolls dropped Megan and made her whack her head against a rock.

...

NegaMorph was watching another of Matts training lessons with an amused grin. He never realized how fun watching pratfalls from a great height was. "You'd think being a third dragon would make riding them easy," said NegaMorph, "But then, it wouldn't so much fun."

A scuttling noise got his attention and NegaMorph looked down to see a spiderbot nudging his foot.

"You guys again? What do you want now?" he asked.

"Your princess is in another castle," chimed the spiderbot with every tone indicating it was serious.

"What?" asked NegaMorph, not quite understanding.

"The princess has been kidnapped," tried the spiderbot, using another sound clip.

"Kidnapped, wait a minute, you're not saying..." started NegaMorph.

The spiderbot made a dinging noise from a game show soundtrack, briefly getting the attention of Matt and the kids down below, though Matt distracted them by accident by falling down again.

"Who did it?" snarled NegaMorph, "If they damaged one hair or tentacle on her head..."

"The trolls, the TROOOOLLLLLS!" said the spiderbot, hopping up and down before making a sighing and grabbing NegaMorph's leg.

"Oh no," said NegaMorph he was suddenly flung through the air.

...

Surprisingly the other spiderbots were waiting to catch him when he arrived...at least it seemed that way, till they jumped aside at the last minute to reveal a granite rock. "I hate you," muttered

NegaMorph before he impacted.

A short time later, Matt was in the forest where the spiderbots had tossed NegaMorph. "Ok, you have my attention. Now what's this all about?" asked Matt.

"The bots here say someone snagged Megan and I found Gary out cold...still hasn't come round," said NegaMorph, pointing at where the spiderbots had deposited Gary.

"Any idea who or why?" asked Matt.

"Spiderbots insist it was trolls." said NegaMorph in a bored tone

"Trolls...like what Gobber was talking about?" said Matt, not sounding very believing.

"Apparently so, plus I found some statues in the sunlight that look new," said NegaMorph.

Matt soon spotted three statues, roughly manlike in shape except being quite shorter than he was. However, these things had long arms that nearly scraped the ground, cow-like tails, huge noses, large ears, shaggy hair on their heads, and ugly features that varied like protruding fangs, warts, scars, or horns.

"Those...look very realistic," began Matt before he was given a heart attack by Gary yelling "MEGAN!" behind him

Matt yelped and accidentally knocked one of the statues over. It rolled down the small incline out of the sunlight until it hit a tree and broke. However, instead of just being rubble, the dust cleared to show a flesh version of the statue rubbing his head. "Ah, stupid sunlight, me hate being stone," grumbled the troll.

Matt stared for a second before snarling angrily as he caught on and grabbing the troll, lifting it surprisingly easily. "Start talking or I'll break you where the sun doesn't shine," growled Matt.

"Yu hooman, release me hooman," said the troll angrily before screaming in a high pitch as Matt shifted to Hybrid form.

"I'm also dragon, so start talking or I show you what my insides look like," growled Matt.

"Ew, really? You haven't any idea where he's been. But you could probably take a good guess from his smell," said NegaMorph.

The troll gulped. "Ve come from under big rock," he said and screaming again as Matt roared in his face.

"Try again," snarled Matt, his eyes going red.

"Matt, we can't rescue Megan if we roast him," said Gary.

"Sure we can, we have two spares," said NegaMorph, pointing at the other stone trolls.

"Big rock, dat big rock!" screamed the Troll, pointing with its free

hand at the mountain.

Matt, Gary, and NegaMorph both looked up at the mountain. "That's as big a rock as you can get around here," said NegaMorph, "Perhaps we can narrow down exactly where, if the little cretin's vocabulary is big enough."

"If I tell...you not eat me?" tried the troll.

Matt thought about it, "Deal, where's the door, tiny?"

"Teeny? Me have yu know me am very large for me age," said the troll.

"Yeah, you must be more than this," said NegaMorph, holding up eight fingers to reflect how many the troll had.

"Black blob man creepy," said the troll with a shudder.

"He is, and it's his niece that your buddies kidnapped," said Matt.

"Oh zis is bad," muttered the troll before being carried along by Matt.

...

"It's a cliff...where is the door?" said Matt in an angry level voice while glaring at the trio's captive.

"Door hidden, else lookyloos vander in," said the troll.

"Open the door or I break parts of you off," snapped Matt.

"Ok, ok, put me down first," said the troll.

Matt dropped the troll before pointing at the angry-looking NegaMorph and Gary...and the dozen spiderbots. "You betray us...they get you," he said, having chosen to stay in hybrid...though his wounded wing from his Changewing encounter still hurt.

"Ok, ok," said the troll before walking over and pulling out an inconsequential-looking rock from the cliff. A door, so finely aligned to the rock to be invisible, suddenly shot open at that, revealing a darkened cave beyond.

"Ok...let's go," said Matt, walking inside.

"Shouldn't we call for backup?" asked Gary.

"No, we can handle these guys. We brought spiderbots," said Matt.

However, as soon as Gary and NegaMorph walked in, the troll quickly slammed the door shut before the spiderbots could get in. "HA!" he cried before the door suddenly exploded and the rubble buried him.

"Double ha," said the lead spiderbot as they scuttled in.

"Gotta love those spiderbots. Cause mayhem, boys. By the time we find Megan they'll beg us to take her and you guys away," called Matt cheerfully, the spiderbots splitting up while the gang headed down the main tunnel.

After some time, Gary said, "I would have thought there would be more trolls down here."

"Maybe they're on snack break," said Matt.

Suddenly, NegaMorph's back vibrated and he unfolded the tip of one of his spines to reveal a cell phone. "I got a text from Megan," he said.

Matt looked over NegaMorph's shoulder to see the text saying "Know you are coming...leave...will end badly for you if not."

"Oh, how polite, she is being locked in her quarters for the rest of the trip," Matt said.

"She's clearly sent us a warning," said Gary, "Maybe the trolls are more dangerous than we thought."

"I dunno...it seems different from that," said Matt.

"One thing's certain, we're not leaving here without my niece," said NegaMorph.

Matt looked round the corner to see several trolls on guard. "How quaint...guards," he commented.

NegaMorph cracked his knuckles and said, "They're gonna be wishing they didn't have this shift."

Matt grinned evilly. "Coming Gary?" he said.

The trolls on guard looked in confusion as a trio of...things walked round the corner, one looking human, though his aura betrayed him. "One chance, boys...take a coffee break," said the human-like one.

"What's coffee?" asked one troll.

The human grinned and pulled out a waterskin, before shoving it in the demon one's mouth, amid complaints. The demon started twitching as its many eyes started bugging, accompanied by a disturbing giggling.

The human grinned and pulled back, with some difficulty, the waterskin and tossed it to the trolls before saying "Quick...save the coffee."

The curious trolls sniffed at the waterskin's mouth, intrigued by the interesting scent within. "Vhat thez?" asked one.

"MINE!" screamed the demon before shooting at them.

...

Megan wasn't having as nearly as bad a time as the others were

thinking. She was getting really comfortable when she heard the sound of frenzied fighting, accompanied by manic giggling. "That would Matt, or Uncle Nega if Matt gave him coffee again," said Megan.

A second later, the stone slab doing cover as a door exploded outwards, causing the trolls inside the room to jump before a black blur shot around the room bashing trolls left and right until it stopped to show NegaMorph sucking like crazy on a leather waterskin with an insane look, Matt and Gary walking inside.

Gary struck a heroic pose and shouted, "Megan, we are here to rescue you from the trolls'..."

"Manicure," finished Matt flatly.

Megan did indeed appear to be having a manicure, though the troll responsible was currently embedded in the wall thanks to NegaMorph who was now eating the waterskin. Megan was seated on a silver throne and was wearing a tiara on her head, along with various necklaces, rings, bracelets, armlets, anklets, and tailrings. She gave a bored glance at the group and said, "It figures you guys would show up. I guess I'll have to move the foot rubs ahead of schedule now."

"Megan, get down from that throne right now," snapped Matt.

"Hmm...no, I really like this throne," said Megan, "Though it could use a few more cushions."

"It wasn't a suggestion," said Matt, his voice echoing as his temper rose.

"Hey, yu no talk to beauty goddess like that," said one of the few guard trolls still standing. Matt stopped at that, Megan jumping as she sensed pure anger before Matt simply blasted the troll.

"Megan, I don't understand..." said Gary.

Megan sighed and said, "It's simple, by troll standards, I'm the most beautiful girl they've ever seen and thus they think I must be a goddess. This is why they've been giving me the royal treatment."

"Megan, you cannot stay here. There are rules. You're not supposed to be here," said Matt carefully

"So what? The timestream doesn't make much mention of trolls, does it? As far as anyone would know, I was spirited away like every other human beforehand," said Megan.

"No...NO...you WILL come...with me or I will...make you," said Matt, seeming to snap as glowing lines appeared around his angry eyes.

"I think the king here has objections to that," said Megan smugly. Matt seemed to not care before he noticed something bad, turning to stagger back from a whack. Megan looked impressed that he was still up before a final blow knocked him out

The king of the trolls could easily be identified in being taller

than the other trolls, the small cloak hanging from his big shoulders, and the golden crowns atop his two heads. NegaMorph, still on cloud coffee simply lunged at him. The troll king snorted loudly with both heads before spitting two big loogies at NegaMorph. Where the spit hit him, his body grew hard and grey which started to spread all over. When he did land, which was shorter than he must have intended, he was a marble statue.

Gary, who was shaking Matt awake, watched in shock. "Wow...nasty," he muttered.

"Now, Gary, I know you're much more reasonable than both Matt and Uncle Nega. Wouldn't you agree that I deserve this?" asked Megan.

"Yes...but not like this. You just let two of your friends get hurt, ma'cherie," said Gary, Matt groaning "Uuuurgh...what hit me?"

The troll king lifted them both up by the back of their shirts. "You no want intruders?" asked one head.

"Me could smash them if you want," said the other.

"No, no, just take them to the dungeon for now. I think they can be reasoned with, but they clearly need more time to think about it," said Megan.

...

Gary sighed in defeat, Matt still only semi-conscious and NegaMorph still a novelty garden gnome. "This cannot be happening," he muttered to himself. The three of them were in the dungeon, in one of the larger cells meant for dragons. If Gary had to guess, the runes along the bars were there to keep dragons from forcing their way out, which will keep Matt from simply breaking out once he fully came around.

A cracking noise occurred and Gary jumped back as NegaMorph finally smashed is way out. "That...was...disgusting...really? Petrifying bogies?" he said.

They heard the shimmer of a shadow portal and they looked up to see Megan emerged from one outside their cell. "Uncle Nega, I thought you'd be waking up around now," she said.

NegaMorph's large eye blinked as the pupil in it changed from blue to grey then back to black. "Wow, that's a lot of avarice and vanity you're giving off," he said.

Matt nodded weakly, a bandage showing how bad the bash had been.

"Well, that's sort of expected from a rich beauty goddess, isn't it?" said Megan.

NegaMorph rolled his eyes and said, "Ok, I know those flowers made crankier than usual, but you're really taking this too far."

"Matthew is badly hurt. Can you not see you are hurting your friends?" snapped Gary.

"Oh, he couldn't be that hurt," said Megan.

"He hasn't made a sarcastic comment since he's woken up," said Gary.

"Oh, that bad? Ok, maybe I should help speed up his healing," said Megan, her hand glowing black.

Matt's eyes immediately shot open the instant the spell's glow appeared on his wound, the pupils pinpricks before his back arched and he began screaming uncontrollably. "MEGAN, STOP IT!" yelled Nega.

Megan thought Matt was just feeling the pain from the sped-up healing but then she started seeing smoke coming from her scalp. She quickly stopped and said, "I'm sorry, I don't know what happened. That was supposed to be a simple healing spell."

Matt was out cold again, the bandage soaking red. "Maybe the same thing that turned Kala into a walking fireball. Elementals are neutral...but they hate darkness, especially the energy-based ones," said NegaMorph thoughtfully before seeing their faces and saying "Hey, just a theory, but we really need to get him out... NegaMorph tried to open his own shadow portal, but he couldn't to get it going. "Don't tell me, they shadow-proofed this room," said NegaMorph.

"No, the king's spit weakens magic. You won't be able to open a proper one for a few hours," said Megan.

"Why didn't you stop him?" demanded Gary.

"Well, I didn't know Matt would be hurt that bad and you guys were going to spoil my fun..." said Megan, starting to sound ashamed.

"Warning...severe cranial injury detected...autodoc treatment required..." chimed Matt's wristcomp before it beeped "Error...anomalous energy based DNA detected."

"Ok that cinches it. We need to go, you especially. You have the only working shadow portal, Megan," said Gary, seriously.

"Ok, ok, I'll just go tell the king that Matt needs help and we need to head back to the surface," said Megan.

"Thank you, Ma'cherie." said Gary with a smile.

...

The troll king was sitting on the throne when a shadow portal appeared and the dark goddess appeared. "Erm...King? You might have hit my friend a little too hard," she said.

"Me thought you say his head really thick," said the troll king.

"Well, I didn't mean that quite that literally," said Megan, "Or maybe it isn't as thick as I thought it was. Anyways, he really needs a healer and I need to take him back above ground."

"No...you betrothed to me son...yu stay," said the King's right head.

Megan paused and said, "Excuse me, I'm what?"

"Yu marry me son, ze prince. Stay here forever," said the king's left head.

"Uh, I am definitely sure I never agreed to that, especially the 'stay here forever' part," said Megan.

"Actually you do not have a choice mine dear. Zat jewelry you are wearing has limited your portal range to this cave network," said a small voice.

Megan looked around and asked, "Who said that?"

"Oh, that me other head," said the right head.

"He didn't talk," said Megan.

"No, me other other head," said the left head before the troll king pulling his collar down, revealing a smaller head on his chest.

Megan just stared before the head sighed "You try living with these idiots in the same body and you will see how much you talk."

Megan glared. "Huh...you think your two bit spells can stop me?" she said before opening a portal, shooting down it and being shot back out, the jewelry glowing red.

"As I said mine dear, most of us may have the brains of moldy cheese but we very good enchanted items," said the middle head, rolling its eyes.

Megan glared before saying, "Fine, then I'll blast a new tunnel out." She turned and started shooting her laser vision at the wall.

"We thought of zat too," said the middle head, as nothing happened, "Would you like to meet the groom? JUNIOR!"

There was a loud thud, followed another loud thud, and a third louder thud. As the thuds continued, Megan realized they were footsteps. "He is such a big boy. Sadly all the muscle went into his arms instead of his heads. I'd stand further away if I were you, darlink," said the middle head.

Megan quickly scrambled back in anticipation. There was a pause before a really tiny troll walked through one of the cave entrances. "That's your son?" asked Megan incredulously.

"No, zat is just the Royal Zahnarzt," said the middle head.

On cue, the wall next to the tiny troll exploded outwards and a troll head swallowed the tiny one. "JUNIOR! NO CHEWINK! ZE HELP! I do apologize mine dear," said the king as a much larger troll walked through, one head chewing.

Then the other head's mouth opened and the tiny troll hopped out. "Your teeth are okay," he squeaked before clambering down the large troll and scampering away.

Megan looked at the 'prince' and said "I'm marrying that?" in a deadpan tone

"Him biggest and strongest troll in kingdom," said the left head.

"Takes much after me," said the right head.

"Not quite enough," said the middle head a little bitterly.

"No...not a chance...I'm not marrying that guy," said Megan, backing up.

"Of course you are," said the middle head, "No one else deserves you."

"No, as in I refuse to marry him." said Megan, now realizing she was against the wall.

"Sorry, but ve trolls don't accept refusals to marriage proposals, only overthrows. Not like zat vill happen," said the middle head, "Besides, you wouldn't vant your friends to miss out on ze happy occasion, would you?"

Megan smiled a little before saying, "Since the wedding's on, I want my guests be fully healed before the ceremony. I just need to talk to them a few minutes before they go."

"Very vell, mine dear. But try anything unt zey vill be zee reception dinner," said the middle head.

"Whatever you say, your majesty," said Megan, one of her left hands crossing fingers behind her back.

â€|

Gary and NegaMorph looked up as Megan came back into the jail, Matt having deteriorated to the point that his face was pale and he was sweating.

"Guys, I've gotten you a way out of here, but there some complications," said Megan.

"Which are?" asked Gary.

"I...have to marry the troll prince," said Megan.

...

Chloe sighed as she kept stalling the kids before pausing, "Did anyone hear someone yell 'Noooooooooooo'?"

...

NegaMorph sighed. "Thanks, I never liked my eardrums that much,

Gary," he said.

"Hey, I'm not happy about it either," said Megan, "But there's a loophole. If someone beats him in a fight, he has to give up his claim on me."

"I'd just be stoned again...and thanks to your fiancÃ©'s dad, Matts out of commission..." snapped NegaMorph before everyone turned to look at Gary.

"What? Me? Er, I prefer not to brawl unless I have to," said Gary.

"It has to be you, I don't want anyone else having a claim on me," said Megan.

Gary looked around before sighing "What have I got to do?" he said gloomily

"You have to challenge the prince to a fight and win. I don't think it matters what kind of fight, just so long as it proves you're strong," said Megan.

NegaMorph grinned "Escape...or seeing Gary pulverized...win/win." he said to himself, rubbing his hands together.

"I think Matt's leaking brain pan is a more eminent problem," said Megan, "Just get him rested up and then come back and crash the wedding."

NegaMorph sighed. "Fine," he muttered.

Matt moaned something at that, gesturing Gary close. "Matt...what is-URK!" said Gary before being grabbed round the throat. "Kick...that guy's...arse," managed Matt before letting go.

"I can't wait any longer. I'm getting you guys out," said Megan as she opened a shadow portal.

...

The trolls looked up as Megan reappeared. "Ah, mine dear. I trust your friend iz still among ze livink," said the middle head.

"I sent him to a healer," said Megan, "He'll be back as soon as he's recovered."

"Zen vy are zey still in ze cells? I know everything zat happens in my mine," said the middle head calmly.

"I only sent him, he need an express ticket out and he really, really needed to be healed," said Megan.

"Unt how do ve know the void valker vill not return?" said the middle head, annoyed.

"Your door's pretty well hidden and Matt's terrible at guessing games," said Megan.

The middle head seemed to consider this "Fine...but if he tries to

return..."

"I don't think he'll coming back to soon," said Megan.

"Fine...let uz proceed," said the middle head.

"What? Now? Isn't there supposed to be a waiting period between the proposal and the actual wedding?" asked Megan.

"Ve don't believe in dilly dally...ve begin...chop chop," said the middle head, before looking at his companion heads. "Clap, you ninnyhammers!" he snapped. The two heads started clapping their hands. "Twice is enough, dumpkoffs," said the middle head.

...

Gary looked around before looking at NegaMorph. "Are you sure?" he asked.

"Trust me, it's the best way to keep in shape and warm up," said NegaMorph.

Gary sighed before charging NegaMorph. However, NegaMorph easily sidestepped Gary before tripping him up and making him fall. "Too easy to predict," said NegaMorph, "You can't just charge, you do something unexpected before you hit."

Gary got up a little unsteadily. "How does Matt do it? That's what he does."

"You need to figure out your own style," said NegaMorph, "Figure out what goes best for you. Now, let's try some kicking."

Gary immediately got up and aimed a kick at NegaMorph only for a tentacle to send him flying. "Ok...ow," he groaned.

"Tut, tut, shouldn't leave your legs unguarded," said NegaMorph.

Gary gave him a suspicious look and said, "You're enjoying this, aren't you?"

"Yup," said NegaMorph happily.

"Aren't I supposed to defeat the troll prince to save your niece from an awful marriage?" asked Gary pointedly.

"Yeah...but beating you senseless is a bonus. Now we'll try projectile dodging," said NegaMorph, making several fangs appear in his fingers, for throwing.

"Is this even necessary? I'm pretty sure the prince is more into bashing than anything else," said Gary.

"Probably not...but I'll never get another chance for this," said NegaMorph evilly.

"I'm starting to think the things Matt has said about you are justified," said Gary.

"Oh they were," said NegaMorph, before throwing a spread of luckily, sterile fangs

There was a series of 'poiks' before Gary yelled, "YEOUCH!"

"Oh, don't be such a big baby. They're only in skin deep," said NegaMorph.

...

Matt groaned, slowly coming too to find himself being looked down on by Chloe. "What hap-?" he began before Chloe clocked him one. "Ow! Watch the head!" snapped Matt, rubbing his sore cranium.

"You nearly got killed...I had to tell the Vikings that you fell off a cliff," snapped Chloe.

"No, I got bonked on the head," said Matt.

"By what? An ogre?" demanded Chloe.

"Close, a troll, the king of the trolls if you want to know," said Matt.

"You're kidding." said Chloe deadpan

"No, and he wants Megan to be his daughter-in-law," said Matt.

"What?" said Chloe, going bug-eyed.

"But don't worry, Gary's going to fight the troll prince for Megan's hand and he has NegaMorph for back up," said Matt. He looked at Chloe and said, "You seem upset."

"I am...I'm actually surprised you're not," said Chloe a little nonplussed.

Matt shrugged and said, "Things happen. I bet Gary will be alright."

"Me too," said Chloe, puzzled by Matt's mood, "Er, don't you want to get payback for nearly being bonked to death?"

"Mmm...nah. I don't really feel like it," said Matt.

Chloe looked surprised. Usually Matt loved a good death threat. It was an excuse to kick arse. "Matt, I heard NegaMorph has sold some of your stuff on another island," said Chloe.

Matt shrugged. "I hope he got a good price," he said, his eye twitching a bit.

"You know what, before we head on to the trolls, let's stop by the wharf...to pick up a wedding present," said Chloe.

"Ok..." said Matt with a faint grin.

...

Gary groaned, rubbing his head as NegaMorph stepped back, tossing Gary his club. "Ok, again," he said.

"Where did you even get these clubs?" asked Gary.

"The guards lent them to me," said NegaMorph.

"How'd you managed to get them to do that?" asked Gary.

"Oh, I promised them just what they're getting," said NegaMorph.

"What's that then?" asked Gary before noticing the guards were watching. "Oh...right," he said gloomily.

"Smash him good!" called one guard.

"Quiet!" snapped Gary before being knocked senseless by another blow.

"Ok, five minutes break," said NegaMorph, "If you're not up by then, I'm gonna have to slap you awake."

A third troll came in at that "You...you know leetle robot spider peoplez?" he said accusingly.

"Maybe, I know lots of robot spiders," said NegaMorph, "Let me guess, they're been in the armory or treasury."

"No...dey makink lots of holes in walls, roofs and floor, chasink digger dragon," said the second guard.

"Digger dragon? I shouldn't be surprised there is one, but is that what they're spending all their time on?" said NegaMorph.

"Yah...zey also hittink us a lot," said the third guard gloomily.

"That sounds more like them," said NegaMorph.

"Anyhoo, eet iz time for weddink. You come now," said the first guard.

"Oh, already? We...haven't anything appropriate to wear," said NegaMorph who was nudging Gary with his tail.

"Er..." began Gary only for the trolls to grab them. "No dress code here," said one of them.

"But there are other guests that ought to be arriving," said NegaMorph.

"No...you only guests. YOU COME NOW!" said the troll, roaring in NegaMorph's face

"Ok, ok, geeze," said NegaMorph, mentally adding, 'I hope someone shows up soon.'

...

Matt looked around confused at the dock, Hiccup and Astrid watching. "So you think the bash on his head's mellowed him?" asked Astrid

"Ruffnut and Tuffnut bash heads all the time and they aren't very mellow," said Hiccup.

"Matt's a bit softheaded sometimes, but I know something that ought to upset him," said Chloe before kicking Matt off the dock.

Matt landed in the water with a splash before coming back up. "Hey, what did you do that-" he started before the Scauldron suddenly snatched him up.

"So...your plan was to get him eaten," said Hiccup dully before there was a 'ptui' and Matt landed head first on the dock, steaming slightly from the hot water.

"Ow," he said faintly

"How ya feeling now?" asked Chloe, prodding Matt with her boot.

"Where's that smeghead who HIT ME?" yelled Matt.

"He's better now," said Chloe.

"I KNOW WHERE THEY LIVE! CHARGE!" yelled Matt, running past the gang...until the toxin kicked in and he fell flat on his face, snoring.

Chloe sighed and said, "I guess we won't be rushing in to the rescue any time soon."

...

Megan sighed as NegaMorph and Gary were dumped in a corner before the middle head said "Ok, ve begin. Iz everyvon here? VERE IZ ZE GROOM?!" he yelled, noticing his son was missing.

"Him getting ears cleaned," called a troll.

Megan shuddered and muttered, "I hate to be the troll who has to do that."

On cue the wall exploded outwards and the groom walked in, the right head chewing suspiciously. The king sighed and the middle head said, "Son...spit out your ear cleaner."

The right head snorted and spat out a very miserable looking troll. "Ears are all clean," it said before scampering off.

"Ah, now ve begin. But before we start...does anyvun vish to lay claim?" called the middle head.

Gary gulped before calling, "Yes, I vish, I mean, wish to lay claim."

"Very vell, ze shrimpy vun shall do combat," called the middle head.

"What do you mean, shrimp one?" complained Gary

The prince's heads snorted before cracking his knuckles. "Don't worry, Gary, I believe in you," called Megan.

Gary whimpered as a hand like a small car grabbed his throat. "Mummy," he whimpered before all present winced as Gary was thrown around.

"Personally, I'm putting more faith in that either Matt or the spiderbots do a timely intervention," said NegaMorph.

There was a crunching noise and Gary flew overhead to skid to a halt at Megan's feet. "Hi...ma'cherie...this is exactly as...oh no," he managed before being pulled back.

Megan sighed and muttered, "Where are those spiderbots anyways?"

...

The Whispering Death that called Berk home wasn't usually afraid of anything. It had even once bested a Night Fury. That had changed...since...they had arrived barely an hour beforehand.

What looked like spiders wearing metal armor had invaded its tunnels. The Whispering Death tried to kill the spiders with spikes and fire rings, but the small creatures weren't harmed at all.

"The game's afoot," called of the spiders in an artificial voice, wearing some kind of hat.

The Whispering Death decided to evade these strange invaders by digging into new areas. But everywhere it went, those little creatures seem to be waiting for it. A rumble was heard before the whispering Death was tackled...

...

Meanwhile, the other rescue party was about to break into the trolls' lair and save the day. Once they find the door, that is.

"I'm sure it was here," said Matt, turning to Chloe, Starflame and the kids.

"You said that 5 minutes ago," said Chloe, "Are you even at the right cliff?"

Matt pulled Chloe close. "I need to use explosives to do it...get me?" he hissed.

"And if you put them the wrong place, you'll bring the whole mountain down on us. Or at least one third of it," said Chloe.

"When did I ever do that?" said Matt.

"What about the time you were trying to get us into that hidden bunker?" said Chloe.

"Ok...once...but this is different," said Matt stubbornly.

Meanwhile, the kids were looking at the cliff themselves. "There has to be some clue as to where the hidden door is," said Hiccup.

"Maybe it has something to do with the taste of the rocks," said Fishlegs. He licked a rock on the wall and spat in disgust. "Ok, maybe Meatlug's a better judge of rocks," he said.

Meatlug wandered over to the rocks before taking a deep bite out of a section, revealing a tunnel and a surprised troll. "Hey, yu broke ze door," complained the troll.

Matt stared before yelling "GET HIM!"

The troll tried to run back into the tunnel, but Meatlug grabbed him by his tail, causing the troll to yelp. The troll finally opened its eyes to see Matt's upside down grin. "Ok, take us to your leader. Always wanted to say that," said Matt cheerfully.

"Uh, king iz busy vith vedding right now," said the troll.

"We're the party crashers," said Chloe, with an equally creepy grin.

"Prince von't like vedding being invaded," said the troll.

"Ask us if we care," said Matt, the cheerful tone vanishing at high speed

"Er, you know that's just a watchman, er, watchtroll, right?" asked Hiccup.

"Yes...so he'll know where Megan is," said Matt icily.

"She iz in big ceremony cavern, can't miss it," said the troll.

"Show us...or I feed you to my dragon," said Matt.

Starflame gave a predatory grin, though she was actually thinking _'That dirty thing? I haven't any idea where he's been. I'd probably chew him a little at most.'_

The troll yelped and practically dragged Matt along...and literally. Chloe sighed and looked at Hiccup and Astrid. "You two coming?" she asked.

"I think we better stay here so we'll be able to go as soon as you get out," said Hiccup.

"If you can get any gems, I wouldn't mind some," said Astrid.

Chloe nodded. "I thought it was dragons that had...never mind," she said.

As soon as the Lynches were in the tunnel, Chloe said, "You think it was a good idea to leave them behind?"

"Hey, this just means we can use our guns without having to answer awkward questions," said Matt.

Chloe nodded, pulling her blaster out before a rumbling was heard.

"What was that?" asked Matt.

Suddenly, a large snake-like dragon with a large round mouth burst through the wall, with spiderbots sitting between its spines. One spiderbot was on its head and wearing a cowboy hat. "YEE-HAW!" called the spiderbots, clearly from an old western movie.

The duo watched in polite disbelief before the terrified dragon dug into the opposite wall. "Well...we know where they are now," said Matt before hearing what sounded like a fight down the corridor. "Ooh, I hope we're not too late to watch Gary fight the troll prince," said Matt.

"Gary's fighting who?" demanded Chloe.

"Did I forget to mention that?" asked Matt.

Chloe nodded before a painful crashing was heard. "Someone's losing." The duo reached the door in time for Matt to be hit in the face by a thrown Gary.

Gary looked up and gave Chloe a dazed look. "Ah, reinforcements have arrived," he said, a little slurred, "Thank goodness you brought so many."

Chloe looked confused "But there's just us tw-ooooh boy."

"Gary, did you forget that you could change into a gargoyle?" asked Matt.

"Gargoyle? Oh, yes, well, he didn't give me enough time to change," said Gary.

"Then use the time...you have," moaned Matt from ground level.

Gary closed his eyes in focus and soon started to change. A pair of feathered wings ripped out of the back of his shirt while a leonine tail sprouted out. His boots were ripped apart by claws that also appeared on his head. Once his ears became pointed and his horns grew in, he gave a roar to show he had finished.

Matt managed an 'eep' before a crunch was heard and Gary slipped down into a new impression of himself. "Get...off," rasped Matt.

Gary stood up and off of Matt. "Sorry about that," said Gary, "Greater body mass I suppose."

Chloe dragged Gary, with some difficulty, to his feet. "Ok, rule one of fighting: visualize that troll as everything that you despise, everything you hate, like telemarketers," she said.

"Ok, I think I can manage that," said Gary.

"Ok...you angry?" asked Chloe.

Gary nodded. "Yeah."

"I can't hear you," said Chloe causing Gary to say "Yeah!" a little louder.

"LOUDER!" snapped Chloe, causing Gary to scream "LET ME AT EM!"

Chloe nodded. "All ready."

Gary managed a "Wait, wha-" before being kicked back into the ring.

"Hey, how come puny human look different?" asked one of the trolls.

"I'm not just human, I'm a gargoyle," said Gary.

"Hmph, gargle still scrawny," said the troll prince's left head.

"Now we really rassle," said the other head.

NegaMorph, in classic experiment form had set up a bookies board, with poor Gary having the highest odds. He'd had the idea when he'd seen several of the smarter trolls betting gems and his internal greed sense had swung round to 'cash alert' NegaMorph spotted Matt and Chloe as they walked in. "Hey guys, wanna get in on the betting? If you put something on Gary, there'll be a big payoff," he said.

"NegaMorph...are you betting against your niece's boyfriend?" snapped Chloe.

"Well, I put a little side bet on him, but I put most of it on Gary getting knocked senseless twice," said NegaMorph.

"NEGAMORPH!" snapped Chloe before she saw that Matt now had a betting slip.

"What? I'm betting that he's going to win with all his limbs still attached," said Matt.

"Ah, ah, that includes the tail and wings," said NegaMorph.

"So?" asked Matt.

"And breakages," added NegaMorph, causing Matt's face to fall.

...

The prince looked confused at Gary before looking at the king who shrugged, the middle head saying "Zere iz no rule against thropes."

"Hmph, still scrawny shrimp," said the prince's right head.

"Just scrawny shrimp vith vings," said the left head.

"I'm tougher then I look!" snapped Gary, still angry. That just made all the trolls start laughing loudly. "Stop LAUGHING!" snapped Gary, Matt noticing that Chloe looked pleased with herself.

"Huh, didn't think your pep talk would have that much of an effect," said Matt.

"It didn't...but the Candet012 patch I out on his shoulder will. I found a crate of them in the base," said Chloe happily, causing Matt to double take.

"Uh, Chloe, those patches were banned," said Matt.

"Since when?" asked Chloe.

"Since about a few months after you first disappeared," said Matt, "They had a high chance of causing the users to go into frenzies."

NegaMorph said "You mean like that?" pointing to where Gary was actually lifting the prince.

"There was one other problem: they wore off really fast too," said Matt.

Gary's muscles may be stronger in gargoyle form, but not strong enough to lift the troll prince without enough anger to motivate him. As such, he quickly buckled and the prince landed on him with a splat. "Ha, that's the second time he's senseless, I win!" called NegaMorph.

Matt glared at Chloe at that as Gary slowly got back up. "Any other advantages you gave him?" he snarled

"Uh, go Gary go?" said Chloe a little weakly.

"Oh sure, moral support, that'll turn the tide," said NegaMorph sarcastically.

...

Megan however was watching in horror as Gary was pulverized. "Oh...Gary," she said, wincing at a snap followed by Matt yelling "Dammit!"

"I'm...not giving up...yet," said Gary as he got back up, only for the prince to flatten him against the wall. Gary slowly pulled himself out and said, "I'm...not beaten...until I quit."

"You lose puny person who is puny," said the prince's left head.

"Beauty goddess mine, she no want loser," said the right head.

"No...she is not yours," growled Gary, his eyes going yellow while Chloe shrugged to herself.

"Yes she is," said the left head.

"And you can't do nothing, weakling," said the right head, shoving Gary back.

Gary snapped at that, his gargoyle form growling larger and more monstrous. "This'll be good," said Matt, sitting back to watch.

"I...won't...LOOOOOOSSSSE!" roared Gary as he fully entered his monster form, becoming slightly taller than the prince. Suddenly, his body started to bulge as his muscles grew. His arms became much longer and the claws on the end became sharper. His skin started to turn a stone grey as his body started to grow in size. His face quickly started distorting, stretching out into a draconic muzzle while his horns grew longer and his hair disappeared. The Viking clothing he wore wasn't enchanted to grow with his body so it all but ripped apart as the monstrous stone gargoyle roared in fury.

The prince looked up and the heads said "Uh oh." before Gary grabbed them by the shoulders, flipped them over and began bouncing their heads off the floor

"Huh, I was wondering when he'd get around to that," said NegaMorph.

...

Megan watched with a smirk as the king watched, open mouthed as his son was pummeled.

"Guess your boy isn't the strongest guy around here anymore," said Megan.

"Zere is still a...never mind," said the middle head as his son was thrown into the wall, falling back out cold.

"Alright, ze match iz over, you can stop," called the middle head.

Gary turned snarling before seeing Megan and shifting back down to his half-form. "I won?" he said to himself.

The king however said, "Ok...letz get ze vedding going vonse my son comes round."

"Hey, wait a minute," said NegaMorph, "You said that if someone could beat your son, he could claim Megan instead of him."

"I lied, I'm evil, vat did you expect, demon?" said the king's middle head as his guards moved in

"Well, I guess we will be blasting our way out after all," said Matt as he got his blaster out.

Just then, a rumbling shook the room. "Is that what I think it is?" asked Chloe. Suddenly, the Whispering Death burst through the floors with spiderbots all over its back. The king and trolls jumped back in horror as the terrified dragon whipped around, causing the spiderbots to fly in every direction with 'wheee' noises and latch onto victims.

"Ok, didn't see that one coming," said Megan.

"Me and Chloe did," said Matt.

The Whispering Death, finally free briefly considered trying to eat the spiderbots and then had a laundry list of thought why it was a terrible idea, before leaving.

Gary grabbed Megan and called, "Let's go."

"Just a second, I need to grab my winnings," said NegaMorph as he grabbed several handfuls of gems.

"Let's just go." yelled Matt, firing a yellow beam from his blaster that turned a lunging troll to granite. "RUN AWAY!" yelled Chloe

"Spiderbots, chaos mode, get everything that's moving!" yelled Chloe, the spiderbots beginning an attack on any troll in range as the gang ran for the exit.

However, one troll managed to get through and tried to slice at Matt with his sword. However, it got his sun blaster instead. Matt dropped it in shock, the damaged power cell beeping as it began to overcharge. "RUN FASTER!" he screamed, shooting to the front of the pack.

The group quickly barreled through to the tunnel, with the trolls who weren't incapacitated by the spiderbots fast behind them.

...

Hiccup, Astrid and the dragons however were outside. They had heard some of the fighting noises echo out. "Matt'll be ok," said Kala toward Stormfly and Toothless.

"I hope so. It sounds like they've upset the whole mountain," said Stormfly.

"That'll be Matt alright. He can upset people on planets he isn't even on yet," said Kala proudly before a yell of "RUN AWAY!" was heard, Matt and company coming into view. "And he usually bites off more than he can chew."

"What the-" started Hiccup as Matt ran out.

"Just keep running and don't look back or...you'll turn into a saltlick!" he yelled.

"Or just be blinded for life," added Chloe as she ran by. The kids and dragons looked up to see a horde of angry trolls, led by a huge three headed one heading up the tunnel. The kids quickly got on their dragons and took off. They didn't even have time to notice there were others flying behind them.

On cue, a blast of pure light shot out the tunnel, frying the trees in its path before cutting off. When the light cut back off, all the trolls had been stonified. "Look...we won," commented Matt, from

Starflame's back.

"Assuming they won't eventually turn back to flesh and come after us again," said NegaMorph.

"Not unless some dumbarse casts a spell to do it," said Matt, turning to look past the kids and say "Right, Megan?"

"Yes, though I don't think anyone would want to do that," said Megan.

"That mean we can go back and loot their caverns later?" asked Astrid.

"No, there were...more dangerous creatures in there," said Matt.

A second voice said, "Where should we land, ma'cherie?"

"Wait, how are you all flying?" asked Hiccup as he started to crane his head back.

"Don't look back, there's still some magical radiation and stuff. Very dangerous," called Chloe.

"Really...do not look back," said the 'ma'cherie' voice.

Hiccup kept looking forward, but he had a feeling there was something going on behind them that wasn't as dangerous as they said. "Let's land...LOOK FLYING FISH!" yelled Matt, pointing while also apparently pointing down.

Hiccup heard the flutter of large feathered wings and turned back. However, there was nothing behind them except Matt and Chloe riding Starflame. "What are you looking at?" snapped Matt. Hiccup shrugged before turning back, only the dragons hearing Kala snigger.

Suddenly, it occurred to Hiccup that Megan wasn't there and he quickly turned around. However, Megan was behind Chloe on Starflame. "What?" asked Megan.

"I, uh, I'm just surprised Starflame can carry that many people," said Hiccup.

Starflame had a bug eyed look, snorting in draconic _"I can't smartass."_

Fortunately for Starflame, Chloe noticed the frantic flapping of her wings and her panting. "Uh, I think we need to lighten the load," she said.

"Sure, who wants to bail out?" asked Matt.

Chloe and Megan looked at each other before Chloe said "Sorry, Matt." pushing Matt off.

"Argh, tricky females!" yelled Matt before hitting a few branches and landing on the forest floor.

Luckily, the revenge he wanted occurred as he landed on Gary. "Ow!

What did I do?" yelled Gary.

"I'll...think of something once I come round," moaned Matt.

...

A short time later, the gang had returned to the village and recounted their tale to Gobber, at least as much as they could share. "So let me get this straight. After Gary managed to defeat the troll prince all on his own, the lot o' you accidentally broke a magic gem that caused the trolls to turn ta stone permanently before ya all ran away," said Gobber.

"Er...yes," said Matt, as innocent as a puppy next to a puddle on the carpet.

"Right...then I supposed ya arm wrestled a frost giant for a huge mug of mead," said Gobber sarcastically.

"No...was I supposed to?" said Gary, in a shaking voice.

Gobber laughed and said, "Good story, but it still doesn't outdo Mulch's 15-foot eel story. Ha, wrestled down the troll prince, that'll be the day."

Matt's eye twitched and he got ready to snap only for Gary to get there first, yelling "IT'S TRUE!"

"Sure it is, lad," said Gobber, patting Gary on the head, "I bet you showed that smelly brute what for."

"I did too," muttered Gary to himself.

"Welp, I got a Hideous Zippleback with a sore tooth to pluck. Not sure which head it's in yet," said Gobber before walking off.

Gary just stared. "He...he didn't believe us. I went through all that...and nobody believes me," said Gary in a tiny voice.

Matt patted Gary on the shoulder and said, "Well, we couldn't have told them you turned into a big gargoyle and such, but I'm pretty sure you've proven yourself to someone."

Gary sighed before Megan hugged him. "Like me," she said.

Gary smiled and said, "I suppose there's that."

"Yeah, I guess he did alright," said NegaMorph, apparently indifferent. Chloe glared at him before giving him a small electrical zap. "Ow, I mean, I guess he made a little proud, just a bit, don't put too much stock in it."

"Uh, guys, do you mind if me and Gary have a little alone time to talk?" asked Megan, "Somewhere private?"

"I don't think that should be a problem, right, NegaMorph?" said Matt.

NegaMorph rolled his eyes and said sarcastically, "Sure, I bet you'll have the same attitude with your own daughter's out with her

boyfriend."

"Shut your mouths," said Matt before grabbing him with plasma control and dragging him off.

Chloe turned to Megan and Gary and said, "Whatever you want to talk about, I wouldn't take too long. Matt'll only keep NegaMorph in check for so long."

â€|

Megan and Gary went to the cliffs above the Dragon Academy, a considerable distance from prying eyes. "So, Megan, what was it that you wanted to talk to me about?" asked Gary.

"Well, I mainly wanted to apologize about the way I've been acting earlier," said Megan.

"Well, you were having a hard time adjusting to the lower setting of civilization here," said Gary, "I should have tried to have been more supportive."

"No, it was no excuse," said Megan, "I turned against you guys for luxury and I nearly got Matt seriously hurt because of it. Not to mention the way I hurt you. Gary, I am really sorry about being mean to you earlier. I shouldn't have put gifts in front of you."

Gary said, "It's ok. It wasn't you talking. I should have paid more attention to you in the first place," he said, kindly.

"No, no, there was nothing wrong with you. It was all my fault," said Megan, "Could you ever forgive me?"

Gary said, "How could you say such a thing?" before gently taking Megan's hands and saying, "Of course, mon cher."

Megan smiled and said, "You're the best guy a girl like me deserves."

"And you're the best girl that anyone deserves," said Gary. Then both leaned forward and kissed.

NegaMorph landed on a distant rock, muttering about Matt's temper when he spotted Megan and Gary kissing. For a second, he saw red before shrugging. "Ah, they earned it."

* * *

><p>There's another chapter. This one doesn't directly involve dragons, but trolls have been mentioned in the film. I'm not really sure if they actually exist in the series, but we'll dabble in Norse, and the occasional Greek, mythology during this story. It's almost a pity that we won't be dealing with trolls again but we'll be certainly get a lot of other stuff to make up for the relative lack of villains in the show.<p>

However, next week we actually will be dealing with one of the show's villains. To find out who, just wait for it to pop up in 7 days. Please review.

4. Grotesque Misconduct

****Voyagers Saga****

****Broken Nest****

****Chapter 4: Grotesque Misconduct****

Raids were not at all uncommon near the seashore in these barbaric times where Vikings sail the sea. But though Viking raids could be notoriously brutal, they haven't yet been able to match up to what the Marauders were capable of doing.

The Marauder squad leader looked down as the fort commander was dragged towards her. "Let's try from where we left off before your men turned stupid: where is Captain Lynch?" she asked.

"I don't know. I never heard of him. I hope he gets his foot bit off by a clam for causing all this trouble," said the fort commander.

"That brings me to some good and bad news," said the captain.

"Are they relevant to me?" asked the commander.

"Well, first off, we're going to leave and check elsewhere," said the captain reasonably as the commander's guards moved away.

"Oh, too bad, so sad," said the commander sarcastically.

"Well, that brings us to you bad news: I'm going to vaporize you," said the captain, pulling out a blaster and firing a orange beam into the Viking's chest, the luckless commander vanishing with a scream that cut off. "Make the attack look like it was another local tribe. We'll try inland. MOVE OUT!" the captain called, waving her men back to their gunship.

â€|

Things on Berk were a little less settle than usual because they had just received a message. It seems that Dagur the Deranged is coming with a small armada of Berserkers and the dragons needed to disappear.

"So...this Dagur guy's completely insane?" said Matt, standing next to Starflame. He'd decided to stay on Berk until he 'graduated' which wouldn't happen till he learnt how not to fall off from 30 feet up.

"Well, he didn't get the name 'the Deranged' for being reasonable," said Stoick in a dark tone, "Not like his father, Oswald the Agreeable."

"Yeah, though we'll still need to trade here every so often. Some of us have real...appetites," said Matt, aimlessly before looking ahead, "Oh, here they come. Any advice for dealing with Dagur the Dufus?"

"For starters, don't say anything about dragons," said Stoick,

"Secondly, he will push your temper so it's best to have someone cool-headed around to keep yourself in check."

"I'm perfectly cool headed," protested Matt, a distant buzzing coming from the ship approaching.

Stoick glanced towards the ship before dismissing the noise and saying, "Also, Dagur has a tendency to pick on kids smaller than himself. Hiccup and Fishlegs usually fall into that category, but you might want to keep him clear of your own."

"Believe me, he picks on Lilo, he'll be in traction before the day's out," muttered Matt to Starflame who nodded.

"It's mostly boys who aren't manly that are his favorite target," said Stoick, "Which makes me worry about Gary."

"Gary's tougher than he looks, I assure you." said Matt, adding, "If Dagur tries to hurt any of my crew, I'll feed him to that sea dragon that's stalking me."

"Why do ya suppose it does that anyways?" asked Stoick.

"It's the fates annoying me again," said Matt darkly, stomping off and leaving Starflame to give Stoick a confused shrug with her wings before following.

Eventually, the moment they've all been dreading had arrived. The Berserker ships had entered Berk's harbor and were getting ready to dock.

"Ten-shun," said Matt, the disguised marines all standing to attention. When the gangplank lowered, Matt could guess which one was Dagur, seeing as he was the youngest-looking, had a mad twinkle in his eyes, and his helmet had long horns that seemed somehow familiar to Matt. "Ok, like I said, play nice for now," said Matt quietly.

"Dagur, it's good to see the son of my old friend," said Stoick, his teeth slightly gritted.

Dagur looked around with a lofty look before focusing on Matt. Dagur strode on over to Matt. Now they were closer, Matt could notice they were about the same height, though the horn gave Dagur an extra foot on him.

"Is there a problem, sir?" said Matt, using the same tone he would use to call someone a 'smeghead'.

"You're not from here," said Dagur, "I know all the men on Berk, and most of what they might call 'men'."

"I'm from...Britannia. Me and my men have settled the area," said Matt in a neutral tone, returning Dagur's gaze.

"Ah, Britannia, I hear the people are really easy to plunder there," said Dagur.

"You haven't met my men, have you?" said Matt, the two now seemingly waiting for the other to blink.

"And you haven't gotten a good look at my men, have you?" responded Dagur.

"I can think of 6 ways I could have killed you and your men before you even finished getting on shore. Your security is sloppy and overconfident," said Matt, forgetting himself briefly to give a professional opinion.

"And your men look like they couldn't carry a single log between them," said Dagur.

"Really? Xander?" said Matt, a mountain of a man, walking into view at the head of the dock, the planks audibly creaking and cracking. "He's big," said Matt

Dagur glanced up at Xander and said, "Hmm, your crew seems to have its characters of note. I think you've earned my tolerance...for now."

"Good, but let's be clear; if any of my men have...accidents, don't sleep," growled Matt quietly, his eyes blazing blue for a second.

"Ooh, a tough one," said Dagur, apparently missing the blaze, "You wouldn't happen to have Berserker blood in you, would you?"

"That comparison has often been made," admitted Matt. Matt stopped as he noticed Dagur look aside and spot Lilo, who was the only one not at attention, chatting to Stitch and Sue who looked annoyed thanks to the 'collars' they had as a disguise. "I wouldn't if I was you. Size isn't everythiiiiing," warned Matt, grinning as he hoped against hope that Dagur would ignore the warning.

However, what Matt didn't know was that Dagur wouldn't ignore a challenge, especially if it involved something mean. He strode over to Lilo and said, "Hey kid, those are some ugly dogs of yours."

"Oh, he's an Egyptian blue-furred ectoplasmic detection hound." said Lilo with her usual happy demeanor.

"He's an ugly mutt," said Dagur before looking at Sue and said, "And an even uglier weasel." Luckily nobody saw Sue use her middle claw to make a very human insult as Dagur turned back to Lilo. "You don't look like a Viking," he said nastily, causing Stitch to growl.

"Matt says I'm too young to pillage," said Lilo.

Dagur glared at that. "Is that supposed to be a joke? I was pillaging at your age easily. You look weaker than Hiccup," he said, Matt covering his eyes in horror given that there were some instincts that EXP added...such as always taking a prompt to cause mayhem like Dagur's.

"Bet I can throw you into the water before you can," said Lilo. Stoick also heard that and started forward to try and diffuse things when Dagur went to grab Lilo. Nobody outside the crew were sure what happened, other than one second, Lilo's arm had been grabbed and the next one, Dagur was half way through an arc off the dock. The Vikings started at Lilo with shock. "The trick is to let your opponent build

up momentum and then use his weight against him," she said.

"We've travelled," said Matt quickly, before pulling Lilo aside. "Much as that was fun..." he was heard saying as a confused Dagur pulled himself up on the dock, with an impressed look.

"So, it looks like your crew can fight after all," said Dagur as he walked up to Matt, "I could like you, if you swore loyalty to me of course."

"You can't afford me," said Matt darkly

"Your loss," said Dagur.

"Uh, Dagur, perhaps now may be a good time to tell us why you've come here," said Stoick, "The annual treaty-signing isn't for several months."

"I'm here because something's used dragons to destroy 3 of my outposts," said Dagur loftily.

"What makes ya certain it was dragons who did it?" asked Gobber, "Not that we train dragons."

"All the outpost soldiers had been burnt as had the buildings," said Dagur.

"Musta been wild dragons then," said Gobber, "They can be pretty nasty."

"There are no wild dragons near my lands. Plus, my men found this," said Dagur, pulling out a helmet with a half symbol on it and tossing it down.

Stoick picked up the helmet and looked at it. "Hmm...this is very peculiar," he muttered.

"I know, it's used by you," said Dagur.

"That looks like one of the helmets I sold a few years back," said Gobber, "Souvenir helmets were a big thing back then. Everyone wanted to collect one helmet from each clan."

"You expect me to believe that?" said Dagur with a laugh.

Matt spoke up at that, "No, but my sq...clan's been trading for food with them for the last week or so and I've been here on business. Nobody could have hit your outposts and gotten back without my men noticing...even if they flew."

Stoick glared at that, "I told ye the first time, we haven't got any dragons here."

"Then you wouldn't have a problem with me trying to find them," said Dagur.

"Yer wasting yer time," said Stoick.

"It's my time, I can waste it however I want," said Dagur.

Matt watched as Dagur walked up the dock before saying "What a little whiny creep."

"I much preferred it when his father was chief," said Stoick.

"I can see why. You know...I don't usually...but if you wanted him to have a few accidents. I could arrange a discount," said Matt, apparently talking to the water.

"Well, as tempting as that would be, it would start a war. And Berserker are known to fight until-" started Stoick before there was a splash. Stoick turned around and saw an absence of Matt. "Where'd he go?"

...

Gary and Megan had decided not to attend the 'welcoming' of a guy that Hiccup and company agreed was the biggest jerk in existence though they had all watched as Lilo had flipped him into the drink.

"Well, I suppose we ought to be standing out of his way," said Gary.

"So...how bad is Lilo's new punching bag?" joked Megan, looking at Hiccup.

"Well, let's just say he likes practicing with knives, mostly to see how close he can come to hitting you," said Hiccup.

"Hmm...I'd pay money to see him try that with Matt. He gets really annoyed if you poke him without permission some-oh and there's that dragon again," said Gary, pointing out where Matt was glomped and pulled into the water

"You know, we ought to think up a name for him if he's going to keep showing up like that," said Megan.

On cue Matt was shot out the water again, landing somewhere far behind them. "How about Spitter?" suggested Gary before a happy whistling was heard from Matt's oceanic tormenter.

"Nah, not slimy enough," said Megan.

Lilo had walked over by then and said, "How about Steampipe?"

"Why Steampipe?" asked Hiccup.

"Because he can shoot steam out his nostrils and make a piping sound," said Lilo.

"I like it...now can someone fetch a ladder?" called Matt, from where he had landed in a thankfully unlit torch tower.

"I'll get it," said Gary before walking off.

...

Gary finally found a ladder, with some bird's nest direction from Matt (who, with nothing to do, had fallen back on the traditional

'being a smartarse' pastime) found a shed near Gobber's. Gary checked the rungs and said, "Ok, I think this will do. I just hope Matt hasn't been eating too much."

"Well, what have we here?" said a voice behind him.

"Of course," said Gary to himself in French. He looked up to see Dagur leering over him. "Uh, hello," said Gary.

"You're new here, from the new crew, I bet. But you're not Britannia, are you?"

"Er, my family is, but I was raised Fra...in Gaul," said Gary.

"Oh, a Roman's pet then," said Dagur with amusement.

Gary gave him an annoyed look and said, "I was not a pet, I was a servant. To a very respected family I'll have you know."

"Still a pet in my eyes, Gaul. How much did they pay for a scrawny thing like you?" said Dagur, clearly enjoying Gary's discomfort.

"It was a family-born thing," said Gary, "My parents worked for them."

"I can see why you were sold then," said Dagur, amused as Gary glared. "Is anything the matter?" he asked tauntingly

"No...nothing's...wrong..." said Gary, "Now if you'll excuse me, I need to pull my friend off of a tower."

Dagur blocked the way for a minute. "Not yet, the captain claimed you and your companions are his equals, his 'men', so you should be able to fight."

"I don't see a reason to fight," said Gary, "There's nothing to fight about."

As Gary tried to walk past Dagur, Dagur stuck out his foot and nearly tripped him up. "I think I can think of a few things to fight about," said Dagur, "Like how I don't like your face."

"I don't want to fight you," tried Gary, trying to get back to his feet again

"Let's see how quickly I can change your mind about that," said Dagur, snatching the ladder away from Gary.

"Hey, I need that," called Gary, a little overloud in the hope someone more reasoning turned up.

"Oh, and how are you planning on getting it back, shrimp?" taunted Dagur.

"I...I..." began Gary before hanging his head. He couldn't very well use his...skills against Dagur, not without exposing the crew.

"Just what I thought," said Dagur before using the ladder to knock Gary onto his back, "You're about as manly as Hiccup, and that's not

much."

Hey, what the hell you doin'?" called the voice of one of Matt's men at that.

Dagur glanced towards him before saying to Gary, "I'm sure we'll be seeing more of each other." He then dropped the ladder on Gary and walked away.

Chris ran up shortly after. "Gary, you ok? That jerk do anything?"

"I'm fine. A little dirty, nothing to worry about," said Gary.

"You sure?" asked Chris, clearly not believing a word.

"Of course, it's nothing that I can't endure. I mean, he is an honored guest and it would be very rude to strike out against him," said Gary.

"You are allowed to kick his ass if you want," said Chris.

"That isn't the way that gentlemen solve their differences," said Gary, "Now I need to help Matt get down before something decides to use his head as a nest."

...

"He tried to fight you?" snapped Matt.

"Well, I didn't accept his challenge, isn't that important?" asked Gary.

"No...I mean yes. You did the right thing. Bullies have short attention spans. He'll get bored if you don't rise to it," said Matt.

"Then that's exactly what I intend to do," said Gary.

"Good...and if he does hurt you, rip his liver out. Works for me," said Matt cheerfully.

"That hardly seems polite," said Gary.

"No...but it's good for stress," said Matt.

After Gary walked off, Lilo commented, "You know, Gary's the only person I know who probably wouldn't be affected by Manners' powers. Or at least not noticeably."

"Yeah, people need to let loose otherwise they go mad...insane..." said Matt, before Chloe muttered "And then they join a mercenary company."

"Well, how long will it take for him to give up finding a dragon army?" asked Lilo.

"The dumb tend to be hard to get bored," said Matt.

"Three days, that's my bet," said Chloe.

"You think he'll keep looking that long?" asked Lilo.

"No, but he'll have worn out Stoick's patience by then," said Chloe.

...

As it turned out, Dagur kept himself amused by tormenting Gary. During the first day, it was typical schoolyard bully stuff: trapping him in boxes, dangling him from a tree, he even stuffed a live eel down his shirt. However, Gary took Matt's advice and ignored it and it appeared to be working.

"Are you made of stone?" Dagur finally snapped.

'Sometimes,' thought Gary before saying, "No, it's just that we Gauls have an exceedingly long-lasting patience. We can wait out just about anything."

"I noticed," muttered Dagur before suddenly smirking, "You know, Gary, I'm starting to like your style. How about we bury the hatchet?" Gary reflexively covered the top of his head. "It's...a phrase...usually," said Dagur, pulling a waterskin out his pack. "Here, to our future victories," he said, offering it, Gary noticing some white smoke coming out.

"Is this kr'ta?" he asked

"I never heard of that stuff. But it's a special elixir that only we Berserkers know how to make," said Dagur, holding out the waterskin, "Here try some."

Gary wasn't sure he wanted to, because that reminded him too much of kr'ta, especially the way the drops from the spout hissed when they hit the ground. However, Gary knew that Matt was still breathing so, with a shrug, he gulped down a sip and coughed. "Got...a kick," he said weakly.

"Yep, so, wanna chase down some wild hogs and butcher them?" asked Dagur eagerly.

"I...I need to go...hurt...the captain..." said Gary, twitching a bit before walking stiffly towards where the gang was resting.

Dagur shrugged and said, "More swine for me then." He took a swig from the waterskin before his eyes bugged, he started frothing at the mouth, and then he let a loud yell before charging off into the woods.

...

Matt looked up to see Gary walk in. "Hey Gary...you got a second?" he asked.

"Yeah...what about?" asked Gary, twitching slightly, his stomach feeling a little unstable.

"Look, I know things have been hard and we're roughing it..." said Matt, as Gary walked up.

"Kinda hard to miss..." said Gary, his fist clenching and unclenching a little sporadically.

"You ok? You need anything?" asked Matt, looking in close before being pushed in the shoulder. "Don't do that," he said immediately.

Gary's eyes glowed yellow for a second before snapping, "Oh yeah, why shouldn't I?" He shoved Matt in the shoulder again.

"Because when that's done more than two times everything just turns into a red haze of death and I never remember how I get covered in stuff," said Matt.

"Oh, you mean like this?" asked Gary before shoving Matt a third time.

Matts left eye twitched and a faint grin appeared.

...

Megan and Chloe were passing as Matt walked out. "So...what happened?" Chloe asked.

"Punched him in the face," said Matt casually before walking onwards.

Megan and Chloe paused at this for a moment before quickly walking to the room Gary was in.

Gary was embedded in the wall. "What happened?" he groaned.

"You shoved Matt three times, didn't you?" said Chloe.

"Did I? The last thing I remember is having a drink Dagur offered me," groaned Gary, as Megan tried fruitlessly to pull him loose.

"And you accepted it? Gary, even Morph could tell you that was a bad idea," said Chloe.

"Really?" said Megan, causing Chloe to concede "Well...maybe not Morph, but anyone else..."

"Well, it would have been rude to pass up," said Gary.

"Gary, rudeness is not that big a factor around here," said Chloe, "I mean, just watch one of the Hooligans for about five minutes and you'll see that manners aren't a high priority."

"We're talking about the five minutes being mealtimes, right?" asked Megan.

"No, Vikings classify honor...erm...you seen Star Trek?" said Chloe, pushing out for an example. Gary just stared blankly. "Ok, let's try something else. These guys go for honor, especially in combat. Any other manner goes down the toilet. This is basically a civilization of Matts," said Chloe finally.

"No wonder Matt barely lifts an eyebrow around here," said Megan.

"No, really, it's nothing I can't turn the other cheek about," said Gary.

"It won't work. I doubt Dagur is smart enough too," said Chloe before sighing, "Don't accept any more 'presents' from him...and stay near one of the team at all times."

"I'll...try my best," said Gary.

Megan sighed and said, "C'mon, Gary, let's get you something non-toxic to drink."

...

Dagur watched from the sidelines, annoyed. His search had found nothing except vanishing sheep and his new 'hobby' now had a bodyguard: the man mountain of a newcomer who had a frighteningly realistic impression of a dragon growl.

Still, Dagur had enough time. That scrawny twig can't be under watch all the time. And maybe a bigger dose will make him a little more combative. He grinned before turning to find the man mountain looking down at him. "Is there a problem, sir?" said the man, looking strangely serene for someone who looked capable of picking up a longboat without difficulty

"Not at all, just wondering when Gary can come out to...play," said Dagur, his eye twitching at the last word.

"The cap...the chief made it quite clear that if you came within 3 feet of Mr. Gary that I was to crush you to the size and shape of a ball and throw you out to sea," said the man calmly.

"You can't be telling our chief what to do," said one of Dagur's bodyguards, pointing his sword at the giant's gut.

Xander looked down before effortlessly pulling the sword out of the guard's grip by the blade. "A demonstration? Are we watching closely?" he said before effortlessly bending the sword into a corkscrew and passing it back politely. "I trust the situation is now clear, gentlemen?" he said calmly before walking back over to Gary.

Dagur and his bodyguard looked at the twisted sword. "Where did that Lynch fellow find this guy?" asked the bodyguard.

"I don't know, but I want one," said Dagur.

"I'm unique," called the man, Xander, causing the two to jump.

"Still, that wimp Gary's had a taste of the Berserker way," said Dagur, a little more quietly, "It's only a matter of time before he wants more."

...

Over the course of the day, the gang has noticed Gary seemed to be loosening up regarding manners. For instance, there was a little matter of the small belching contest...

"...and me old dad said nobody ever got it that far again, hence me name," said Gobber, the gang all looking pale.

"It's the story version of Matt's singing," said Chloe distantly.

"So I think that makes me a proper judge when it comes to gaseous expulsions. Now then, boys, let's see your war faces," said Gobber.

Matt looked over at Gary. "You sure you want to be here? You're not really a burper," he said.

"Well, when in Rome, right?" asked Gary.

"Wow...go for it then, my man." said Matt, impressed.

"Ok boys, get ready to chug," said Gobber, putting down large mugs of frothy beverages.

Matt looked at his before sniffing it and gagging. "What the smeg is this?" he asked.

"Yak milk, oyster juice, some pine sap for texture," said Gobber, "Just what you need to build up a big belch."

"That sounds like poison." said Matt weakly.

Chloe said "We've eaten worse." causing Matt to shrug and down his mug in one shot.

Gobber sighed, "Even I never did that, it's the taste, wait for it..." he said.

Matt's stomach made an interesting sound as his throat seemed to bulge a bit. "That's a burp?" asked Megan weakly.

"No, definitely more solid, stand back," said Chloe.

Matt gagged and ran outside, a hurling noise heard from outside. "Now then, everyone else...on yer marks...get set...chug," said Gobber cheerfully.

Snotlout, Fishlegs, Tuffnut, and Gary all took a big swig from their mugs. They've seen from Matt's example not to drink too much. Snotlout was the first to let rip, his burp actually causing dust to come down...sadly he had been looking at Chloe at the time, resulting in Chloe lunging at him.

Fishlegs was next. He didn't get too much in the volume department, but his breath making some flies drop dead had to count for something. Tuffnut followed, causing Chloe, who was mid-way through choking Snotlout to look around.

Gary clutched his belly as it was giving a pretty loud gurgle. "Whoa, looks we'll be getting some jetsam," said Gobber. Gary grimaced

before his face partially contorted and he let out a massive burp. The burp grew in size and deepness until it seemed more like Gary was roaring. A flock of Terrible Terrors that had been hiding in Gobber's house immediately took flight and flew out the door, one flying through Fishlegs' burp and theatrically falling down, spinning on its hindlegs before falling over.

After a bit, Gary ran out of gas and he noticed the others looking at him. "Uh, excuse me," he said a little bashfully.

"You're a natural, kid," said Gobber, impressed.

"Not exactly what I'd call natural," said Chloe, fanning the air away from her face.

Gary stopped at that. "Wait...those dragons flew right out...WHAT IF DAGUR SAW THEM?" he said panicky.

"They're Terrible Terrors," said Gobber, "They're small, but not stupid."

"We need to get them back right away," said Gary before heading towards the door. Gary ran out, looking for any sign of the flock and as such wasn't looking where he was going, running right into Dagur.

However, Dagur had something else on his mind. "Did you see the dragon?" he asked excitedly, his sword at the ready.

"Dagur, I can explain," said Gary.

"Where is it? With a roar that big, it had to have been a Thunderdrum," said Dagur.

"Erm...yes...I...saw it...out to...sea?" Gary said carefully and about as convincing as NegaMorph holding Matt's wallet.

"No, it had to have been here. Where are you hiding it? I knew there were dragons here," said Dagur, pointing his sword at Gary.

"Of course there aren't any dragons here," said Gary desperately.

"Gary?" Gary glanced back to Megan walking outside, looking concern.

"Yes, Ma'cherie?" said Gary, forgetting not to use modern French for a minute

However, that's when Dagur walked on over to her, taking a step on Gary's chest along the way. "Well, well, who do we have here?" he asked leeringly.

Gary glared at that. "You do not touch her!" he snapped, getting back up.

"Or what?" asked Dagur, "You think you could defend her better than yourself?"

"I will _kill_ you if you touch her!" shouted Gary.

Dagur just laughed at that, albeit his twisted demented laugh. "And here I thought you didn't have any backbone at all," said Dagur, "Looks like that pick-me-up worked after all."

"What was in that drink?" said Gary angrily, grabbing Dagur and lifting him up.

"Sorry, special Berserker secret," said Dagur, "Can't tell you...unless you wanna join."

"You...YOU!" snapped Gary, now lifting Dagur off his feet.

Matt walked into view at that and stopped. "GARY, PUT DOWN THE DELEGATION!" he yelled. Gary turned and snarled at Matt, his yellow eyes and sharp teeth making his face look demonic for a moment. "GARY!" snapped Matt. Gary seemed to snap out of it then, dropping Dagur in favor of clutching his head.

Matt stomped forward and took his turn to grab Dagur, effortlessly flooring the bodyguard who lunged without even looking. "I warned you what would happen," he growled.

"They're harboring a dragon here. I heard it," said Dagur.

"And the reason you are poisoning my men?" said Matt, angrily.

"It's not poison. My men and I take it all the time," said Dagur with an eye twitch.

"That gives you no leave to slip my men something that is clearly making him ill. I could kill you so easily...and not even leave a body. DON'T PLAY STUPID WITH ME!" Matt snapped, actually roaring.

"What's going on here?" Gary, Matt, and Dagur looked to see Stoick giving them a disapproving look.

"This...scum tricked one of my men into taking some kind of elixir that almost sent him mad. So I'm going to kill him, is that ok?" said Matt a little manically.

"That's not how we do things on Berk," said Stoick, "We settle them in a sensible and honorable manner."

"Do we have to?" said Matt before looking disappointed, "Fine."

"Now, tomorrow, we'll settle this with a match in the arena," said Stoick.

"With swords?" asked Dagur eagerly.

"With staffs. We don't kill just because someone displeases you," said Stoick.

Matt looked around before seeming to finally notice he was holding Dagur and letting go. "That's good..." he said before hissing into Dagur's ear, "Matt's in agreement that you need some bones fractured."

Dagur wasn't sure why Matt was referring to himself in the third person, but it was hardly the first time he heard someone do it. "And Dagur is going to turn Gary black and blue," he hissed back.

"Hah, you have no idea what that kid can do. On his bad days I once saw him rip a T-49 tank in half, have fun," said 'Matt' with a manic grin.

'You know Gary's never done anything that violent,' said the real Matt's voice in his head, _'The worst he'd done is bash peoples' heads until they're out cold.'_

'True, but I like to make jerks squirm,' replied Draconus.

The Matt personality gave a little mental poke before turning their head towards where Dagur was attacking a tree stump with his blade like an angry wood chipper. _'Yeah...I can see the terror,'_ said Matt sarcastically.

'He's hiding it. He's just taking out his fear on that stump,' said Draconus.

'Can I have the wheel now? I need to show Gary how to use a stick without hurting only himself,' said Matt.

'Fine...only if I get to control one of the eyes at the fight. It's boring in here,' said Draconus.

_'__Deal, but if you make me dizzy, it's our stomach that suffers,'_ said Matt.

_'__It's a deal...'_ said Draconus before relinquishing control.

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Matt tossed an ion staff over, modified to only tazer, to Gary. The two were out the way in a clearing. "Ok, let's get going," said Matt.

"Matt, have you ever been taught to use a quarterstaff?" asked Gary.

Matt pressed a button on his own ion staff, a second blade appearing and turning it into the staff mentioned in the name before spinning it. "Close combat was kinda mandatory," he said.

"Ok, and wood is supposed to be less painful than this, right?" asked Gary.

"Pain is your motivators. Dagur will probably try to kill you 'by accident'. Me and Draconus are in agreement...in fact, he'll be helping," said Matt, before suddenly yelling "THINK FAST!" and taking a swing.

Unfortunately, Gary didn't think fast enough and got a blow to the shoulder. "Ow," he yelped, "You didn't tell me to get ready."

"Dagur won't," said Matt, in a crueller tone that indicated Draconus

was 'helping' before he delivered a triple blow that ended with Gary on his back.

Draconus placed the tip of his staff on Gary's sternum and said, "If you wanna beat a barbarian, you need to start thinking like one. You can start by forgetting about chivalry and all that other crap that doesn't exist yet."

"But...OOF!" began Gary before a blow winded him, Draconus saying "You're dead...up and try again."

Gary got up and but quickly got knocked back down again. They did this a few times before Gary said, "Can you at least let me get into position? You're not giving me a fair chance."

"What are you going to do about it, sissy?" asked Draconus, poking Gary again.

Gary's eyes suddenly went yellow as he shrieked, "I am not A Sissy!"

Draconus jumped back, blocked several rapid fire blows that the furious Gary threw at him. "That's more like it, tiny," laughed Draconus.

Gary just screamed and hammered forward with frenzied blows. Soon, Draconus found himself mostly on the defense. "Ok, that's enough kid. You're fighting to unconscious, not the death," said Draconus, desperately before blasting Gary back with a low powered blast. Gary was knocked back, but almost immediately sprang up and charged at Draconus with a savage yell.

Draconus glared and span, whacking the back of Gary's head with his staff as Gary charged by.

Gary fell to the ground and sat back up a few seconds later. "What just happened?" he asked, looking completely bewildered.

"You freaked out, man," said Draconus with a laugh.

"I did?" asked Gary before clutching his stomach and groaning.

Draconus walked forward before grabbing Gary and peering a little too close for comfort. "Yup. Whatever that idiot, Dagur slipped you is still working its funky fun. Guess the ingredients aren't good for gargoyles," he said before noticing he'd lifted Gary up, who was turning blue. "Oops," he said, dropping Gary again.

"I...I don't feel so good..." said Gary before he started gagging.

"You barf on me and I'll tear your spine out and floss with it," said Draconus, backing up.

Gary staggered over to behind a tree before a vomiting sound was heard.

"Ok, we could use this. I wanna try something Gary. It seems a certain word may trigger your freak out," Draconus called.

"Do we have to right now?" asked Gary as he staggered back, "I feel sick."

"Well...I do have an idea," said Draconus.

"Wait...urgh...you think a single word could cause me to-" began Gary, only for Draconus to say casually "Sissy." -KILL THAT DAMNED VIKING WHEN I FIGHT IM!" finished Gary.

"Thata boy. Now how about putting that rage to good use and-" started Draconus when Gary let out a frenzied cry and delivered a kick right into the universally vulnerable spot.

Gary immediately came down from the united states of fury to realize what he'd just done. "Erm..." he said before Draconus said in a rasping voice. "1...2...3..." causing Gary to flee.

It just so happened that Megan was coming over to see how the training was going. She was almost there when Gary ran past her. "Hey, Gary, what's-" started Megan.

"Can't talk, gotta run!" yelled Gary.

A few seconds later, a boulder exploded and Matt, under Draconus's control, charged through the rubble. "WHERE IS HE?" he roared.

"Er..." said Megan, not really sure if she should tell him anything.

"Don't bother, I can smell his fear," growled Draconus before pausing and telling Megan in a civil tone, "You two make a nice couple. You have quite a few things in common."

"Really?" asked Megan, causing Draconus to say "Yeah...you got a kick like a mule." before he ran off.

Megan filtered this through before realizing what Draconus was referring to, since Matt never let that particular one down. "What could have possessed Gary to do that?" she remarked.

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The dragon academy was again the arena. Dagur's crew was all in attendance. "Sir...you sure you want to do this? Killing another clanmember even accidentally, too easy if this Viking's as weak as you say," said Dagur's second.

"I think he's grown a few vertebrate since last night," said Dagur, "I hope I get some sort of challenge. It'll be too easy if it ends before the first minute's up."

"We don't need a war. We don't even know what's destroying our outposts," said the second, slightly desperately.

"You know, you're taking all the fun out of beating," said Dagur, sounding annoyed.

"We just need to make it look like an accident. This new clan will be

tied to the same rules as the others," said his second.

"Whatever," said Dagur, "Where is that shrimp anyways?"

"Heading to the arena, last I heard," said Dagur's second before cheering was heard from above, "That ought to be him." The two looked around to see Gary walking into the arena, alone. "That's odd, where's his second?" asked Dagur's second.

"Oh, so he thinks he's man enough to fight me on his own, does he?" said Dagur before snapping at his second, "Get out, I won't have that twig one-up on me!"

"Yes, chief," said the second, walking out and up to the rim, seeing Matt, "Confident little sprout, isn't he? Not taking a second?"

"A second what?" asked Matt.

"To take over when he dies." said the Viking, causing Matt to pale.

"When he dies?" he said weakly, his voice seeming to echo like two people were talking at the same time.

"Well, it's supposed to be until one of them's knocked out, but we Berserkerers can get carried away," admitted the Viking.

"WHAT?" snapped Matt in the same dual voice before saying in a normal voice, "We got to stop this."

"We? I just put-" started the Viking.

Matt interrupted by saying with a slightly different voice said, "Can't we wait until Gary's taken a few hits to the head."

The Viking was about to reply before Matt said, "Tempting, but no. I'm not taking chances."

"You ok?" said the Viking carefully only to be clocked in the face and knocked out, Matt saying "Now look what you did," before saying "He looked at us funny."

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Meanwhile, Gary was getting into position, trying to remember what he had learned from Matt...which only made him a bit more nervous. A second later he was forced to jump back to avoid a slash from Dagur. "Listen, Dagur, there is a better way of dealing with frustration than through aggression," said Gary.

"Oh shut up," snapped Dagur, aiming another swipe.

Gary held his staff in a defensive position as he said, "There really is no need to be brutal. You can be surprised how many situations can be solved by simply talking."

A second later, a quarterstaff hit Gary on the head. This stunned Gary enough for Dagur to knock him off his feet. "This is really disappointing," said Dagur, "I expected an easy fight, but this is too easy. I guess even with some elixir, you're nothing but a

sissy."

"Sissy? Sissy?" snapped Gary, his eyes blazing white before he double kicked Dagur.

"Now that's more like-" started Dagur before Gary got a good hit at his diaphragm. Dagur staggered back before being slapped across the face with a quarterstaff and getting his legs shot out from under him before he rolled back to avoid another blow and getting back up. "Ok, now we're fighting," said Dagur before charging at Gary.

The two traded blows, Gary for some reason repeating "NOT A Sissy!" over and over with each blow until Dagur smashed his staff in half

"Ha, not so tough without..." started Dagur before Gary struck with his broken staff halves and cracked Dagur's staff in two different places. "Evening it up, eh sissy? I can see why he brough-OOF!" he said as Gary screamed like a wild animal and delivered a blow to both sides of Dagur's head with the pieces of quarterstaff.

When Dagur brought up his staff to defend himself, Gary's blow quickly shattered it in three and for good measure, he stomped on the pieces hard enough to crack them. Gary said in a deeper voice, "Gonna rip you apart."

Then the fight completely devolved into a brawl. And by 'brawl', it was more like Gary slamming Dagur into the floor again and again. Matt watched in horror as Draconus said inside his head _"Oh, the sissy's doing well. HAH! Being a head voice means I can say that and he can't hear."_

"As much as I like to see Dagur get his, I think he's gotten more than enough," said Matt, "I think he's unconscious by now anyways."

An angry yell from Dagur silenced that as the Viking finally got his second wind and flipped Gary.

"Eh, they'll probably beat each other senseless eventually," said Draconus. Matt sighed at that, counting the seconds. It would only be a matter of time until all that rage brought out Gary's...other side.

Suddenly, Gary grabbed both of Dagur's legs and started spinning him around and around, building up more speed. Then he let go and sent Dagur with enough force to hit the arena doors and make them open. Gary roared before charging out of the arena.

Matt pointed. "Xander, get him!" he said quickly.

Xander nodded and immediately ran forward to try and grab Gary. "Young one, you need to regain control of yourself," said Xander as he reached forward to grab Gary. However, Gary weaved around his arm before grabbing Xander by the waist. Then he managed to lift Xander above his head. Matt and the group watched with minor horrified interest as Xander was thrown aside before Gary glared to try and spot Dagur.

Matt quickly looked around for anything to use. The dragon-slaying

equipment was restored to keep up the appearance of the Hooligans still being dragonslayers, but Matt needed something a little less lethal. His eyes fell on some nets in the corner before running over as several Vikings tried to succeed where Xander had failed. Unfortunately, Gary's strength allowed him to easily toss them aside like volleyballs. Matt looked around to make sure nobody was there before grabbing a net and running out after Gary, waving to the others to follow.

He was just in time too as Gary had just spotted Dagur, who wasn't fully conscious after being slammed into the doors, but enough of his survival instinct existed to make him try to keep away from Gary.

"Gary, I order you to calm down!" called Matt, running after Gary while hauling the heavy net along. Gary just turned and roared at Matt, his eyes burning yellow and his teeth looking sharper than before. Matt stared before throwing the net in desperation.

The net went over Gary who snarled and tried to find his way out of it. "DOGPILE!" called Chris before jumping onto Gary. The term was unfamiliar to the Vikings, but it didn't take too much guessing as to what Chris meant. Several of them also jumped onto Gary to get him down to the ground.

Matt however stepped back before the 'dogpile' went flying as Gary threw them off, pulling the net off and charging after Gary again, though he was starting to lope as his 'other side' kicked in

"Gary, get back right now!" snapped Matt. Gary only paused to punch Matt, sending him flying backwards. Then he started loping over to the woods. "GARY!" snapped Matt, getting up before staggering and falling over again, out cold.

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When Matt came around, he was pretty sure he had a big bruise on his chest by the way it was throbbing. "Easy there, lad," said Gobber's voice, "You took a big blow there."

"Where's...Gary gone?" rasped Matt, getting up unsteadily.

"Into the forest," said Stoick, "He seems to have lost his mind. What could have possibly gotten into him to make act like such a..."

"Berserker?" offered Chloe.

Matt managed, "He said...Dagur gave him a drink...of something."

"I've heard rumors that Berserkers drink an elixir that only they know the recipe of," said Stoick, "When they drink them, they go into a mad bloodrage frenzy."

"It's why they're called Berserkers," said Gobber, "Also because of their bearskin shirts. Berserkers may be brutes, but they know how to skin a bear perfectly."

"So basically Dagur drugged one of my men," said Matt, his annoyed

tone coming back.

"It would seem that way," said Stoick.

"I hope Gary hasn't killed him...I want to," said Matt angrily, getting up...before falling over again.

"Dagur went into the forest to look for him," said Stoick, "I've sent my own men in as well, to find Gary before he does." He glanced out the window and said, "I hope they find him soon. It's almost sunset."

"Me too...poor guy," said Matt to himself, not particularly thinking of Gary at the moment.

"I think we better start looking ourselves," said Chloe, "Lots of scary stuff comes out at night. Wouldn't want to be lost in the woods then."

"Yeah...Gary might fin-OW!" said Matt, falling off the bed he was on as Chloe 'accidentally' kicked it.

"You'd best hurry then," said Stoick, "I'd send Hiccup, his friends, and their dragons, but I can't risk them stumbling across Dagur."

Matt got up unsteadily and was the last out. "I hope we find him before Gary...poor guy won't stand a chance," he said. As soon as they were out of hearing range, Matt whispered to Chloe, "Get the guys and start looking. Gary's probably going to be even more berserk as a gargoye."

"Oh goody," said Chloe grimly.

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However, Hiccup and his friends had already taken the initiative of looking for Gary. But they had the sense to be looking for him without their dragons. "Ok, he can't have gone far," said Hiccup, looking around at the darkened woods.

"Uh, Hiccup, this won't take too long, right?" asked Fishlegs, "It's kinda getting dark."

"We'll be fine. We just find Gary and get him back before Dagur finds-" began Hiccup before Dagur's voice said "Find what?"

The group turned around to see Dagur. "Oh, hey Dagur," said Hiccup, "We thought you were in the other part of the forest."

"I'm exactly where I want to be." said Dagur, a little too quickly before a rustling was heard. The group quickly turned towards the source of the rustling. There was a bit of anticipation before a rabbit hopped out.

"Oh, it's just a cute little bunny," said Ruffnut. The rabbit looked at her, wiggled its nose, and then let out a screech showing sharp fangs as its eyes glowed red before it leaped upon her face.

"Ok, didn't expect that," said Hiccup.

A louder roar was heard as the moon came out, causing even the bunny to pause before it shrugged and carried on trying to gnaw Ruffnut's face clean off.

"I knew there was a dragon on this island," said Dagur, "You've been trying to keep it for yourselves."

"I've never heard a dragon roar like that," said Hiccup.

"It sounds like its saying your name, Dagur," said Astrid, a little nervously as another roar was heard, closer and louder now.

"Then it knows who its slayer is," said Dagur with a manic smile, "You kids stand back and watch how a real warrior slays a dragon."

The sound of something merrily tearing its way through the woods towards them however seemed to put a minor damper on that, judging from the way Dagur's manic smile seemed to glaze before, as the moon was hidden behind a cloud, a dazed Gary staggered out the bushes, looking like he'd gone four rounds with the roar's owner.

Hiccup gave a sigh of relief and said, "Gary, we've been looking all over for you." "Don't...come near me..." gasped Gary.

"What? You got an upset stomach?" asked Snotlout mockingly.

There was an unpleasant gurgle before Gary said, "As a matter of fact..."

Snotlout leaned in and said "Actually you do look like that time I tried some of-" he said before Gary upchucked.

Everyone winced in disgust before Hiccup said, "I think you really need to see a healer now."

"Oh, he'll need a healer when I'm done with him," said Dagur as he walked forward.

"Dagur, he really does look ill," said Astrid as the moon came back out and Gary went bug-eyed and started twitching.

"Well, I've got the cure-all right here," said Dagur, holding up a familiar waterskin.

Gary quickly stepped back into the shadows and said, "No, keep that thing away from me."

"What wrong? It'll make this a little more interesting," said Dagur reaching to grab Gary and pull him out of the shadows. He didn't care that Hiccup and his friends were watching...why should he?

"DON'T!" shouted Gary, but fortunately the sky was rather patchy tonight and the moon was obscured again.

"Don't what?" said Dagur, dragging Gary out of the shadows again

"Dagur, leave him alone," said Astrid.

"We've got unfinished business, don't we, Gary?" said Dagur, "Our match hasn't officially ended and I think you need to man up again."

"Get AWAY!" snapped Gary, pushing Dagur back.

"You're strong enough with a sip, but let's see how tough you get with a full gulp," said Dagur before tackling Gary down and forcing the waterskin to his mouth.

"No...n-glub!" managed Gary as he was forced to choke it down before Astrid and Snotlout finally acted, dragging Dagur off as Gary choked it down.

"What is wrong with you?!" snapped Astrid, "Can't you see what that stuff is doing to him?"

"I don't care. This is my fight," snapped Dagur pushing Astrid and Snotlout aside as Gary started yelling with pain as the moon came out again "Ok, Gary, let's see what you're made of," said Dagur, dragging Gary to his feet, "Put them up." Gary weakly held up his hands, which were shaking very noticeably. "Ha, you're shivering with fear," said Dagur, "Well you're not going to get any mercy from Dagur the Deranged."

With that, Dagur aimed a jaw-shattering punch at Gary...and stopped as Gary grabbed the fist and began squeezing, an unpleasant crunching heard as Dagur was forced to one knee...before being thrown into the air. The others watched as he sailed through the air before landing in a tree. By the dazed look on his face, he was out cold.

A grunting snarl from Gary snapped them out of their shock and they turned to see Gary doubled over in a patch of moonlight. "Gary, we're going to get you to Gothi. She'll know how to take care of you," said Astrid.

"Get away from me..." snarled Gary in a voice that didn't sound human.

"Look, we can help you," tried Hiccup before Matt and Chris ran into view.

"Get away from him!" Chris snapped.

"But Gary needs help," said Fishlegs. Then Gary started moaning louder, his voice becoming deeper and more inhuman.

"Really, listen to Chris," said Matt, a little desperately.

"Uh, guys, something's really wrong with Gary," said Snotlout stepping back. Gary's skin was starting to turn stone grey and his hands were growing claws that were gouging the ground.

The killer rabbit took one look at Gary, screamed, and hightailed it into the woods. Ruffnut sat up, with only a few chewmarks on her face and asked, "What did I miss?"

"GO NOW!" yelled Matt, reaching under his cloak for something.

The kids needed little prompting, turning around and running quickly. The twins briefly paused to grab Dagur but they ran when they heard a monstrous roar behind them.

The sound of rapid fire cracks were heard, coupled with more roars as the group ran for it, finally taking a breather after a full 20 minutes run, mostly as Dagur was waking up. "What happened?" asked Dagur.

"Gary just turned into a monster!" yelled Snotlout.

"He means a monstrous Berserker," said Hiccup, "We're lucky to have dragged you away alive."

"He beat me? You're lying," said Dagur in shock and anger.

"You saw what he did with one sip," said Astrid, "That much elixir you gave him made him unstoppable."

Dagur looked down to see his waterskin was gone. "I gave him all of it?" he said in shock.

"I hope not," said Fishlegs, "I mean, that would probably kill someone, right?"

"Yes...I think," said Dagur, a little distantly.

"I guess you must have dropped it back there," said Hiccup.

"Oh well, I guess we'll never see it again," said Fishlegs.

Another roar was heard before Matt flew out the undergrowth, followed by the monster Gary had turned into, holding Chris by the throat. "Running time," said Matt dizzily.

The group quickly ran as fast as they could. "Is that a dragon?" asked Dagur, looking back.

"No, it's an angry gargoyle...from France," snapped Matt who was quickly leading the pack. "Where does this go anyway...oh crap," he added, before the group ended up near the cliffs.

"I told you we should have brought our dragons," muttered Snotlout to Hiccup.

"I'll deal with that monster," snapped Dagur, causing Matt to stare.

"I'm sorry, I thought I was insane. He's made of STONE!" he said as the crashing sounds of Gary's approach could be heard.

"What? He's a troll?" asked Dagur.

"No, gargoyle, is that helmet making you deaf?" snapped Matt.

Gary burst into view with a roar, Chris nowhere to be seen before he charged at the group, going for Dagur in particular. Matt muttered, "I can't believe I'm doing this for him," before shoving Dagur out of the way. However, that left him right in Gary's path and he ended up getting a backhand that sent flying off the cliff. The others watched

in horror as Matt flew clean over the edge, though there was a strange flash of light as they ran up and no sign of him in the dark.

But then Gary roared before leaping off the cliff. He spread his wings and glided away into the darkness. Dagur snapped at that. "COME BACK HERE AND FACE ME YOU SISSY!" he yelled into the darkness, a roar that sounded like it was a question heard.

Fishlegs covered Dagur's mouth and asked, "Are you crazy?"

"Is that a rhetorical question?" asked Astrid sarcastically.

The roar sounded again, closer before, with a crash, Gary landed behind them. Dagur pushed Fishlegs aside and said, "Aha, face your match, beast. My sword shall make quick work of you." He lunged forward with his sword, but the blade broke when it struck against Gary's stone hide. Dagur stopped at that, both he and his opponent looking at the broken blade before Gary reached down to grab him. Dagur, however, jumped back and said, "I think it's time for a strategic withdraw."

The gargoyle snarled at that, moving with surprising speed for a walking boulder. The kids turn and ran along the cliff. "Look for a passage too narrow for him to through," called Hiccup.

"Why would I listen to you?" snapped Dagur.

"You could try fighting that thing barehanded," said Tuffnut.

"That would be awesome for 10 seconds," said Ruffnut.

Dagur looked over his shoulder to see the gargoyle smash a tree apart to keep its pursuit. "No," he said to himself in a rare show of intelligence.

Then Astrid pointed forwards and said, "There, that cleft!" There was a cleft in the rockside that looked pretty narrow, but it seemed to extend back far enough for all of them.

"Erm...are you sure?" began Fishlegs before Gary nearly caught him and he gained a surprising turn of speed. Fishlegs was the first to reach the cleft, but he got wedged in the entrance. That problem was soon fixed by the others running into him with enough force to make him pop through.

A second later, Gary reached in, trying to pull them back out. "We need to get in deeper," said Hiccup.

However, Snotlout seemed to have tapped out, seeing how he was muttering to himself, "Find a happy place, find a happy place."

A voice said "Oi, find your own happy place. We were here first."

The group turned around as much as they could to see Techo and Megan in the back of the cleft. "What are you guys doing here?" asked Tuffnut.

"Hiding from Ga-...the big monster," said Techo.

There was a roaring sound followed by the sound of rock crunching as Gary started trying to dig them out. "Oh...Ga-" began Megan miserably before Techo kicked her.

"Ix-nay," he hissed

"Uh, if he really is made out of stone, that probably means it won't take him too long for him to reach us," said Fishlegs.

"About 2 minutes, give or take," said Techo gloomily before asking, "Ok...which idiot called him the S word?"

"That'd be this guy," said Tuffnut, elbowing Dagur in the gut.

"Hey, maybe we can throw him out so the gargoyle will leave us alone," said Ruffnut.

"Oh...you're Mr. Stupid. You're lucky the boss didn't rip your spleen out and make a balloon animal out of it," said Techo frankly.

"He's lucky I won't banish him to a demon toad's pit," snarled Megan in a slightly demonic voice. Everyone bar Techo jumped back at that.

"Uh, she's just joking," said Techo.

"So she's not a witch?" asked Dagur.

"You're lucky I'm not," said Megan with a glare.

"She could hurt you in ways that don't bruise cause it leaves nothing to bruise," said Techo cheerfully

"Guys, as much as I'd like to threaten Dagur, can we please something about that?" asked Astrid, pointing at the raging gargoyle outside. Tuffnut and Ruffnut shrugged before pushing Dagur forward to the front of the cleft. The gargoyle paused, before holding its arm into the tunnel expectantly with a toothy grin.

"Guys, guys, we don't have to resort to sacrifice," said Hiccup, "There has to be another way out of this."

"We need to calm hi...calm it down," said Megan.

"How? By singing it a lullaby?" asked Snotlout.

"Oh, maybe I sing him one of Mea... my mom's lullabies," said Fishlegs.

"Can you speak Fre...Gaulish?" said Techo as the gargoyle, now realizing he wasn't going to get Dagur began scrabbling again.

"Uh, no, but I'm pretty sure the sound of it will be soothing enough," said Fishlegs before starting, "There was a pretty little toad all by herself at the side of a road..." The effect had an immediate effect on the gargoyle. Namely that it was backing up and making discouraged sounds.

The gargoyle looked around before grabbing a boulder, aiming a throw

at the hole...and jumping back as the boulder exploded in a flash of blue light. "Was that a Night Fury?" asked Dagur. However, a dark blue dragon of a different build landed in front of the gargoyle, snarling loudly.

"I don't think so," said Techo, muttering, "About time, boss."

The dragon roared at the gargoyle who roared back, ignoring the rising hum coming from its opponent's open mouth until a blast of blue energy shot out and nearly knocked him down, instead turning a tree into a pyre. The gargoyle soon got back up and roared again, pounding his chest in a show of aggression.

The dragon just snarled before tackling the gargoyle out of sight and hearing of the others before saying in a quiet hiss, "Gary...get a grip." Gary snarled before getting a chomp on Matt's shoulder. Matt roared before grabbing Gary and throwing him off, sending another plasma blast after him, the two back in view.

...

"We must be in that guy's bed. Let's go before it decides to eat in!" yelled Techo, wincing as the dragon and gargoyle rolled by, trying to bite and claw one another. "Megan's gonna kill yooooou," he muttered.

"But a gargoyle and a new breed of dragon?" said Dagur, "Why can't we wait for one of them to kill the other before finishing it-" There was a loud clang as Megan hit the back of Dagur's helmet with a big rock. There was definitely enough strength behind it to knock him out.

"Ok, now dumb-dumb's out cold, someone grab him and then we run," said Techo, 'accidentally' kicking Dagur across the face as he stirred.

The twins grabbed Dagur and the group squeezed out of the cleft before running away, the two behemoths being too locked in battle to notice. Techo spotted a gap between some rocks. "Over here. Take the idiot first, go, go, go," he called, all business, ducking as a stray plasma blast, this time red shot overhead. The group quickly navigated through the rocks, coming back into the forest on the other side.

Hiccup and Astrid were almost through when Techo yelled "GET BACK!" the dragons beam attack hitting the rocks overhead which glowed for a second before exploding. The group was almost all the way through when they heard one particularly loud roar, sounding like whichever one was giving it was in a lot of pain. Then it seemed to quiet down.

Hiccup and Astrid got up to see that Techo and Megan had been blocked off by rubble from the blast. "Come on, we've got to get back there," said Astrid, already climbing up to see a strange sight. She was able to make out a group of people, but the moonlight was in the wrong angle, making her mostly see them in shadow. However, she was able to see that the gargoyle was lying on the ground near them and not moving. She could however see the dragon, standing out thanks to its size and apparently...talking to the men clustered near the gargoyle? It's all it could be doing judging from the gestures it was

making.

Hiccup had climbed up and was looking at the strange sight as well. "What is going on over there?" he asked.

"I don't know. Does that dragon look like the boss to you?" said Astrid, pointing to where the dragon was now waving to another group emerging from the trees.

"Yeah, but dragons can't talk, can they?" said Hiccup.

"Looks like it's...wow," said Astrid, as the dragon seemed to glow, a flash of light seen. "And it vanishes too?" she said skeptically

"I don't think so," said Hiccup.

"We'd better get back, give Matt's clan the bad news," said Hiccup, the two deciding this mystery could wait.

...

They caught up with the others to see Dagur walking along sulkily. "I can't believe I missed out on slaying a dragon again," muttered Dagur.

"That dragon saved us from that gargoyle!" snapped Astrid, finally losing her cool, "That gargoyle killed someone."

"Killed who?" said a voice behind them. The group turned to see a bruised and cut Matt with Techo, Megan and Chris, who was carrying an unconscious Gary.

"You...you were thrown over a cliff," said Snotlout in disbelief.

"I can swim," said Matt, casually before his eyes fell on Dagur. "Ah, just the person I wanted to kill," he said angrily.

Dagur backed up and said, "Wait a sec, if anything happens to me, that'll mean war."

Matt looked around before saying "That's only if anyone realizes you made it here," he said pleasantly. The twins merely stepped aside to make room for Matt to get at Dagur. Matt grinned and walked forward at that before saying, "You poisoned one of my men. If there's a war...you started it."

"Hey, it's a whole Berserker armada up against your small crew. It's obviously bad math," said Dagur, backing up.

"You'll still be dead," said Matt simply.

Dagur turned to the other guys and said, "You're not just gonna stand there, are you?"

"Yup," said Tuffnut.

"Yep," said Ruffnut.

"I don't see a reason to get involved," said Astrid.

"I'm not stopping that guy," said Snotlout.

"I might not wanna watch," said Fishlegs.

Matt grinned. "Let's make this clear for the hard of thinking: poisoning my men...equals you dying...ok?" he said with a mirthless grin.

"Hey, he's not dead, right?" said Dagur.

"That's the only reason you aren't," said Matt.

"Then you don't have any right to kill me," said Dagur.

"I can do this though," said Matt, before punching Dagur on the jaw. The blow sent Dagur spinning back before he fell to the ground. Matt walked up and pulled Dagur back up. "Want a fight with someone who knows how to fight properly?" he snapped, readying another punch.

"Matt...wait..." said a weak voice. Matt turn to see Gary was awake. "I think...he's had enough...for one night..." said Gary weakly, "I think...we all could...use some rest..."

Matt looked at Dagur and leaned in, before doing something that would come back to bite the gang: he let his teeth and eyes morph for the usual creep factor and said "Go away!" Dagur screamed and immediately turned around and ran away. Matt let his features change back, waving, "Bye, don't forget to write. Let's get Gary back to town and we can fetch the dragons too. I have a good feeling that Dagur will want to leave."

...

Sure enough, Dagur was ready to weigh anchor when they got back. However, he was raving about demons and shapeshifting monsters. The Berserker mostly thought that Dagur had been given a pretty bad fright was slightly more deranged than usual.

Matt grinned. "I live for this," he said to himself happily.

Of course, Stoick was more than happy to see them go, especially when Matt told him what he did to Gary, though leaving out most of the 'too interesting' details.

"I'm just disappointed. Back home we'd have destroyed him," said Matt, mostly to himself.

"Well, we've been trying to keep the peace here," said Stoick, "As much as I'd rather see someone more sensible leading the Berserker, I haven't any authority to make that change."

"If he does do it again, there will be a new Berserker boss," said Matt with a cold tone.

"I appreciate the offer, but I'd rather not have a war," said Stoick, "Wars have a tendency of spiraling out of control."

"I know how you feel," said Matt to himself.

"Still, at least we won't be seeing Dagur around anytime soon," said Stoick, "I hope Gary feels better soon."

"He'll be fine. He's mostly just feeling guilty," said Matt.

...

Gary was sitting up when Megan peered in, a good sign though his grim face wasn't. "Hey, I can get you something if you're feeling hungry," said Megan.

"I'm ok. I don't feel like eating. I think I already ate." said Gary before burping up a stone.

Megan and Gary stared at the stone before Megan said, "Ok, I hope whatever else passes through okay."

Gary sighed. "I had a feeling I had done that. Was anyone hurt?" he asked, pausing as he remembered Dagur and adding "...who didn't deserve it?"

"Well, Matt and Chris were battered a bit, but I think they'll heal pretty quickly," said Megan.

Gary sighed. "At least it is over," he said to himself before saying, "What if I had found you first?"

"Gary, I'm a sorceress. I'm pretty sure I can protect myself from a rampaging beast," said Megan before wincing and saying, "Not that you're not normally out of control."

Gary sighed. "I know what I am like when I lose control. That was exactly the right word," he said kindly though there was a hint of hurt in his voice

"But you usually have great control. It was that cocktail Dagur made you drink that made you go, well, berserk," said Megan.

"It could easily be anything else," snapped Gary for a second.

"Gary, you're stronger than that. Gargoyles are protectors, you could only have lashed out if someone really pushed you to the edge. I know that even as a beast, you have a gentle soul inside and would only be aggressive if you have to."

Gary sighed at that. "I am just afraid. I do not want to wake up to find that I hurt you," he said gloomily.

"Gary, you could never hurt me. And I don't just mean I can protect myself from any harm," said Megan.

Chris walked in at that, looking around shiftily before pulling his glove back to show his wrist comp. "Ok, had my comp beam a scan of that gunk. Here's the results," he said, "Apparently that stuff is made from fermented bog myrtle, minced fly amanita, shredded loco weed, chuck full of stuff to boost someone's adrenaline level to Berserker quantities,"

"Wait, did you say 'loco weed'?" asked Megan.

"Yeah, why?" asked Chris.

"That stuff's supposed to be the opposite of wolfs bane. Instead of repelling or suppressing werewolves, it energizes and excites them. It's almost like catnip for werewolves," said Megan.

"But I'm a weregoyle," said Gary.

"You have a little bit of werewolf blood in you, literally," pointed out Megan.

The two stopped at that and turned to look at Chris. "What? I only took a little sniff. You think I'd be stupid enough to taste it?" asked Chris.

"I did wonder why you were sweating," said Megan.

"Don't be silly, I'm fine," said Chris, twitching a little, "Is it hot in here or is it just me?"

* * *

><p>There's another chapter. This one featuring one of the few established villains in the show, Dagur the Deranged. I definitely kept with his ax-crazy (pun intended) personality, though I expanded a bit on the berserker bit from historical references. Also, we have a glimpse of what lies beneath Gary's gentlemanly nature. He usually has better control over himself, but stuff like the elixir can bring out the worst in him. And after two chapters that focus on Gary, we'll turning away to other things. We will be seeing Dagur again in this story, but we have other enemies to deal with. Keep an eye out for next week's chapter and please review.<p>

5. Adventures in Townsitting

****Voyagers Saga****

****Broken Nest****

****Chapter 5: Adventures in Townsitting****

On a remote island in the Northern Sea, a new occupation of humans was setting up their camp. The isolation would have deterred some from settling there, but for these newcomers, it worked to their advantage.

...

"Com is online ma'am," said a trooper, adding, "Councilman McNeil is awaiting an update."

"Of course," said the captain before stepping into view of the monitor, "Alicia reporting."

"Tell me that Lynch is dead and his little mutant friends are locked up," said McNeil's voice, the comm grainy in quality.

"I'm afraid not yet, sir," said Alicia, "I had left Lynch to be dealt with by two of my men, but it appears he has taken advantage of the local wildlife."

"On that note, how is my little brother?" said McNeil.

"Er, we have not made contact with him," said Alicia, not wanting to add that what little evidence there was suggest that Daniel may have been still aboard Lynch's ship when it was destroyed.

"Fine, look, I don't care what you need to do; get Lynch. Am I clear?" said McNeil.

"Transparent, sir," said Alicia.

The comm went dead just as Alicia's second walked up. "Got it confirmed, definite sighting of Lynch. Local leader's ranting about a guy with dragon teeth," he said.

"Location?" asked Alicia.

"Village near that nanofog cloud bank," said the trooper, activating a map.

"Any timeline specifics living there?" asked Alicia.

"Multiples, all juvenile,'" said the trooper.

Alicia swore before saying, "Looks like we'll have to do this the long way then."

"McNeil did say by any means, ma'am," said the trooper.

Alicia thought for a minute before saying, "If they're juveniles, they're bound to be protected. Lynch may do most of the protecting himself. But we need to plan this out to make sure there won't be too many to deal with at once."

"Hey, we could cause a distraction. Our agent says the guy who gave us this info is a bit of a warmonger. Let's give him someone to fight," said the trooper.

"Nobody'll know it was us...we got quite a collection of period gear," said the trooper with a smirk.

"Excellent, then let us proceed," said Alicia.

...

48 hours later...

Matt hopped off the boat, peering around. "Ok, little miss clingy, I know you're waiting to glomp me, not this time," he muttered to himself before Chloe walked past, pushing him off the dock.

Matt surfaced and shouted, "Betrayed by my own flesh and blood! Why would you do this to me- oh, wait, sea dragon." With a violent splash, Matt was pulled back underwater.

Chloe sighed before walking on and seeing the chief seemingly gearing

up for something. "Hey...what's with the heavy weaponry?" she called, walking over.

"There's trouble brewing that could mean war," said Stoick.

"Wait...what? Who'd want to make war on...wait, it's that idiot who poisoned Gary, isn't it?" said Chloe with a sigh.

"Well, despite our convincing arguments, he's still convinced that Berk is somehow responsible for attacking the Berserker outposts," said Stoick, "And apparently he's been finding more evidence it was us."

"Let me guess, his own fevered imaginings?" said Chloe sarcastically before saying, "So, where are you all going? You said it yourself, you have no interest in fighting him."

"We're going to put an end to this once and for all and find those pillagers ourselves," said Stoick.

"Hmm... Is that why you asked me and the others to come along with Matt for his training?" said Chloe.

"Well, we're going to be out of town for a few days and someone needs to keep an eye on the young ones so that they won't get into any trouble," said Stoick.

Chloe opened her mouth to give the standard mercenary objection of 'Are we getting paid for this?' when Stoick said "Officially, I'm leavin' my son, Hiccup in charge...but unofficially, I'd be grateful if you and your friends kept an eye on him. Something tells me you and your brother are trustworthy in that regard."

Chloe reshaped her mouth into a smile and said, "You wouldn't believe how often we've had to deal with this kind of thing. Between you and me, I spend most of my time keeping an eye on Matt."

Just then, Steampipe popped out of the water, his jaws trying to close over a soggy-looking Matt. "HELP!" yelled Matt.

Chloe glared and turned back to Stoick. "Behold, Exhibit A."

"Don't you ever worry that Scauldron will actually eat him one day?" asked Stoick.

"Matt's not edible. Many have tried, all have got terminal stomach ache," said Chloe.

"CHLOE!" yelled Matt again before Steampipe decided he had enough for now and blasted him off with a water blast.

"Besides, Steampipe's only playing," said Chloe.

"What were you guys talking about?" said Matt coldly while trying to get some dignity back.

"We're unofficially looking after the guy who's gonna officially be in charge while Stoick and the others are away," said Chloe.

"Oh...simple. Are we getting-OW!" said Matt, hopping back and falling back into the water after Chloe covertly cut off the standard merc question

"That Scauldron has an odd fascination with your brother," said Stoick as Steampipe decided to simply toss Matt up and down on his tail.

"Probably because of the amusing sounds he makes," said Chloe.

...

Matt, finally free of Steampipe, had gathered the crew together out of the way. "Ok, this is a simple escort and defense job...and no, we're not getting paid," said Matt, adding the last part as several hands went up.

There were several groans before Chris asked, "So where are we going?"

"Right here, we're looking after the Chief's kid...covertly. We don't let him know that he has a few underpaid guardian angels," said Matt.

"Yeah, his pride will be a little crushed if he thinks his father doesn't think he can look after the village himself," said Chloe.

"But he can't. From what I understand, chiefs could be challenged...that'll include proxies," said Techo.

"Well, he's got his friends with him, but he'll be expecting to shoulder most of the responsibility. It's one of those father/son relation things. He'll work himself ragged if he tries to do everything," added Matt with, to some, a surprisingly knowing voice.

"Well, it's just looking after the village for a few days," said NegaMorph.

"Yeah, what could possibly go-" started Morph.

"SILENCE THAT BLOB!" yelled Matt.

...

Everyone near the shack jumped as the doorway exploded, a few peering in to see Matt giving his dragon a rather weak sounding scolding and one of their number embedded on the opposite house. "You've been a bad, bad, bad, very clever and perceptive, bad dragon," said Matt to Starflame. Starflame, to her credit was making the dragon equivalent of 'blah blah blah' motions.

The injured crewmember, the surprisingly enduring midget, had a dazed smile on his face as he said, "Look, birdies."

"Ok, good meeting, guys. We know the plan. Anyone messes up and I eat them," called Matt.

The short dark one said, "Ha, I'd like to see you actually try."

"Not now...too many witnesses," called Matt.

...

Hiccup and his friends watched as the Hooligan fleet vanished over the horizon before turning back to see Chris and Techo watching from the far end of the dock, leaning against the wall. "So, you're the big man in town since your dad's out," said Chris.

"Erm...I guess so," said Hiccup, he and his friends a bit surprised at the question's bluntness.

"I think you'll be surprised how much job runs itself. You just sit in the big chair, look impressive, and just wait for your dad to get back," said Techo, "Nothing to it."

The others glanced at each other before Astrid said, "Hiccup's dad told you to look after us, didn't he?"

"What? That's crazy, you're crazy. Why would he do that? It's not like we're mercenaries," said Chris, the two laughing nervously.

"Well you certainly don't look like babysitters," said Astrid, "Which we definitely don't need anymore. Right guys?"

The twins had lost interest and decided to see how much punishment their helmets could take. "Ok, now use both hands," said Tuffnut, handing Ruffnut back the club.

Chris and Techo peered at this politely before Techo said "Probably not the best time to have made that comment, mate."

"Ruffnut and Tuffnut are always doing that," said Astrid, not even having to turn around, "But we are responsible enough to take care of the village on our own."

"Fine, just as well we weren't hired to be bodyguards or anything then, right, Chris?" said Techo casually, the two walking back up the steps, Matt, Chloe and Starflame visible peering down from the clifftop.

"You think they bought it?" asked Matt.

"Of course, those two are the best actors we have," said Chloe in a sarcastic tone.

"Fine, let's get our facts straight as I predict an angry mob from them in T minus 10...9..." counted Matt before looking up. "Hey, couple of ships coming in. Get Conson and Davia to meet them," he said, his and Chloe's eyes turning reptilian briefly as they 'zoomed in'. The crew onboard the ship looked like your typical 3rd century sailors, but something about them made Matt feel suspicious.

"All units, we got what look like a couple of bulk traders coming in. Keep an eye on them and a hand on your blasters," muttered Matt into

his comm before he heard the sound of Hiccup and company approaching...and they sounded annoyed. "Keep your weapons hidden," muttered Matt into the comm before turning around to look at Hiccup. "Hey Hiccup, here you're filling in for Stoick while he's away," he said in a friendly tone.

Astrid snapped, "And I hear that you're our babysitters. Oh, and those two you sent down, terrible actors."

"I told you we should have done it ourselves," said Chloe.

Matt gave her a sharp look before saying, "We're not really babysitters. We're more like...consultants. You know, to lend a hand or give some advice." Hiccup looked a bit crestfallen at that, prompting Matt to say "I doubt you'll need too. Leadership's usually in the blood...or the spleen...one or the other."

"Your father has confidence in you," said Chloe, "It just that some things can pop up that can go completely out of your control."

"Always expect the unexpected," said Matt sagely before he peered over to see the ships closer now., "Talking of which, here's leadership test 1: Unexpected visitors."

Hiccup looked at the incoming ships and said, "I don't recognize their flags or sails."

"Looks like Ger...Teutons," said Chloe, squinting at them.

"They're out far," said Matt.

"Should we hide the dragons?" asked Fishlegs.

"Should be ok. The Teutonic army doesn't have a functional navy. They'd gain nothing by being dragon haters," said Matt.

"Well, we better go greet them," said Hiccup, "That's what the chief does."

"Sure thing, boss," said Matt promptly.

...

Alicia hopped off the boat. "Ok, nobody acts until I say, keep your guns in your wrist computers till then," she muttered as she spotted a group headed down to the docks.

"There's Lynch and his sister," muttered one of the troopers, "Should we get them now?"

"No...check your scanners. Those are timeline specifics...and is that a dragon?" said Alicia.

"Lynch does keep company with dragons a lot," remarked another trooper.

"This changes things. Everyone play the part," said Alicia before she bowed as the group came into range, "Greetings, young man. We've come to trade some of our stock. Is your Chief present?"

"My father is away on business and I represent him in his absence," said the lanky teen with the pegleg.

"Respect his authorit-aaaargh!" said Matt, Chloe kicking him in the shin.

Alicia smirked beneath her helmet. This was going to be more fun than she thought. The teen stared at her though as Alicia decided to prod the other issue. "It's unusual to see humans and dragons together," she said, turning to look at the black dragoness snarling at her.

"Well, it wasn't easy. But we've established some common ground and they can be really docile if you treat them right," said Hiccup, patting the dragoness.

"She doesn't like me. Is she yours?" said Alicia before turning in shock as Matt said "She's my partner."

"I...wouldn't have expected that a person like you might be able to tame a wild beast like her," said Alicia.

"Have we met?" said Matt curiously at that.

"No, but you don't seem the rider type," said Alicia.

"Bet ya never even rode a pony before," said one of her men.

"Not really..." said Matt, Hiccup speaking at that. "You're welcome to stay the night. These seas aren't safe to travel at night."

"Many thanks. We are weary from our long journey," said Alicia.

...

Matt watched as the traders came ashore before he finally said, "I don't trust them. Something's off."

"I know what you mean, but we need to be tactful in telling Hiccup," said Chloe, "He won't like it if we act like we're in charge."

"It's not like we're bound by NSC rules anymore. We can tell him without worrying about the cops," said Matt.

"I mostly mean his self-esteem," said Chloe, "How would you have liked it the first time you were in charge someone kept going over your head or double-guessing everything you did?"

"And if these guys turn out to be trouble, he could end up dead," snapped Matt, before seeing Chloe's face, "Oh no." Matt turned around to see Hiccup and said, "Hey, Hiccup, how's it going?" Of course, Hiccup's expression was less than glad.

"Hiccup..." began Chloe.

"No, I don't want to hear it," said Hiccup, "I'm the one in charge of the village while Dad's away, not you two. I don't care what you or my dad thinks, I can watch over the village and I don't need you to

be watching over me."

Chloe sighed. "Listen, we have experience...and while my brother likes to put both his feet in his mouth like the idiot he is, he's a good judge of character. If he thinks something's off about these people, he's probably right," she said calmly.

"You think I haven't noticed?" said Hiccup, "Even I think a small group of Teutonic traders all the way out here is suspicious, I don't need you to point out everything. I'm not a little kid."

Chloe sighed, "Fine, we'll be keeping an eye on them too. I'm sure I know one of them...I hope I don't."

â€|

Alicia looked around "This is just weird. Who lives with dragons?" she muttered, walking with her lieutenant.

"Someone who apparently doesn't mind the stench," said the lieutenant waving the air away from his face, "Don't they have laws yet about where your pets leave their crap?"

"Apparently not," said Alicia, taking a camera shot using her wrist comp of the 'chief's' black dragon, who was making weird faces now.

"So when are we gonna frag Lynch?" asked the lieutenant, "I'd rather not stand around here all day."

"Let's just be careful. He might just be an ancestor of the local variant. How long till we get positive ID?" said Alicia, deactivating her wristcam.

"Shouldn't be too much longer," said the lieutenant, "His nanotech ought to pop up on our scanners any time now."

"Fine, tell the men to set some charges at the armory and a sleeper-deeper in their hall. I don't want any shocks or interruptions," said Alicia.

"Shouldn't be a problem," said the lieutenant, "These yokels won't know what hit them."

...

Matt sighed as the traders lifted several crates onto their ship. "Maybe they are on the up and up?" he said to himself.

"I don't know," said Astrid, "Something about them doesn't seem...genuine."

"It's probably nothing," said Matt, looking down at his own wristcomp covertly to where the trader leader's picture had a progress bar next to it.

"Well, they haven't been really talking about what they're trading," said Astrid, "They're just bringing their crates off of their ship."

"What say we take a peek? A good subject takes the initiative," said Matt curiously, strolling down the dock to where several crates were stacked up.

Apparently the twins and Snotlout had already taken the initiative and were trying to get one of the crates open. "You guys think they're up to something too?" asked Astrid.

"Up to something? Maybe, we just want to see what they've brought," said Snotlout.

Matt pushed Snotlout aside and looked at the crate, pulling at a loose plank. "Almost...there...wow," he said wincing before falling back as a stream of gravel fell out. "What the smeg?" he said to himself, reaching in to see if there was anything in the gravel crate.

Ruffnut picked up a hand full of pebbles and asked, "Why would anyone trade rocks?"

"Because they're good for throwing at someone?" suggested Tuffnut. Ruffnut shrugged before tossing her handful at Tuffnut, most of it bouncing off his helmet.

Matt however said "They wouldn't trade rocks. We need to get to hiccup. I think these are trouble...big trouble," he said, looking at his wrist comp to where the progress bar had gotten further, a message saying "Analyzing anomalous energy residue."

"I think it just means that those so-called traders are here on false principles and are probably going to try and rob us," said Astrid.

"Good, I need stress relief," said Matt darkly, running ahead of the others.

"Did his eyes just turn red?" said Ruffnut.

...

Alicia looked at Hiccup and said "It is kind of you to let us stay for the night. We'll be gone in the morning, circumstances permitting," she said, before her nanite HUD lit up.

"Alert...positive ID confirmed. Lethal force authorized by order of Councilman McNeil," it said.

'Excellent,' she thought, 'Now I just have to get rid of the kid.'
"Say...where's your dad?" she asked out loud, looking around. "Pardon my question but you do seem young for a chief."

"My father is away on business," said Hiccup a little stiffly, "I am acting chief in his place."

"Ah...seems fine...and he took his troops with him?" said Alicia, running down a mental check list.

"He took some of his men, I can't tell you how many," said Hiccup.

"That should be fine," said Alicia, smirking before turning to walk out, nodding to two of her men as she passed them.

Hiccup was more than bright enough to tell that something was up. Alicia had said very little about their voyage, her crew, their cargo, or really anything solid about herself. He'd better go talk with the other riders. He walked out to see one of Alicia's crew kneeling down next to the armory hut, standing up and running away as Hiccup watched, a faint red glow flashing.

Thinking that it couldn't possibly be good, Hiccup ran over to see what the crewmember had left.

A small disc, made of metal was stuck to the side, a ring of red lights slowly lighting up around a central one with a steady 'beep'. Hiccup tried to pull the disc off, but it wouldn't budge. As the red lights kept flashing, an instinct in Hiccup told him to run for it quickly. Since he couldn't remove the disc, he decided he'd better get away from it.

...

Matt bumped into Hiccup as he ran towards the hall. "Hey, I was just looking for you. What's wrong?" he asked.

"I think those traders are up to no good," said Hiccup.

"Good, we're on the same page," said Matt.

"One of them just put some flashing metal disc on the side of the armory," said Hiccup.

"What?" said Matt horrified as his nanites flashed 'Alert...explosive detected in vicinity.' "Down!" he snapped before the armory hut exploded. Matt and Hiccup quickly dropped to the ground to avoid the flaming bits of metal and wood that flew over them. "Everyone ok?" said Matt, getting up again unsteadily.

"Yes, but it looks like Gobber will have to make new weapons again," said Hiccup, "Which means we'll be less able to protect ourselves. We have to get to the dragons, they're our only chance."

A voice said, "There he is, get him." causing Matt to sigh.

"And there's my nickname. It's me they're after, hop it!" he said, running for it as a 'brakka-brakka' noise was heard, dust shooting up around Matt as he ran. Hiccup wasn't sure how the 'traders' were shooting at him, but he was pretty sure he could guess how much it would hurt if it hit him.

Two of the traders ran up at that, holding metal sticks, the ends glowing red before one snapped "Which way did he go?"

Thinking quickly, Hiccup said, "He went that way," pointing in the opposite direction Matt had run.

"Good, you're gonna lead us. That way, if you're lying, we can take it out on you...MOVE IT!" snapped the other.

Hiccup gulped and thought, 'I sure hope Matt's going to get help.'

The trio walked into the road that Hiccup had pointed out, the sound of more weapon fire heard in the distance, a disembodied voice saying "The remaining local resistance is disabled. This is team 2. We got Lynch's sister in sight...hey...what was that?...oh smeg, shoot her SHOOT HER...'Bzzt'" The distant weapon fire now sounded randomized, coupled with yells...and a few screams.

"Shit...boss, what's going on with team 2?" said one of the troopers, forgetting for now about Hiccup it seemed, though the other blocked the way back.

Alicia's voice was heard saying, "Calm down, you cowards. We've had sims to show us how to deal with these kinds of mutants. Take them down."

"Yes, ma'am...what about the timeline specific?" said one of the troopers.

"If he gets to be too much of a bother, dispose of him. McNeil promised a full pardon," said Alicia's voice.

"Yes' ma'am. Could use a little backup though," said one of the troopers before a scrabbling noise on one of the buildings got their attention

"Oh no..." said one of them, aiming his weapon up at the roofs. Hiccup also looked up with a hopeful expression.

A figure peered out from the roof behind them before whistling "Yoo hoo." The duo turned in time for Matt to leap down, dealing a mix of blows and kicks to the first trooper staggering him back before knocking him down with a nasty blow to the neck.

The other trooper pointed his weapon at Hiccup and said, "St-stay back!"

"You're worrying about me when you should be worrying about him," said Matt, pointing behind the trooper, who turned to be nose to nose with Toothless.

"Oh smeg," said the trooper before Toothless roared, grabbed him with his mouth, and shook him like a rat.

Matt winced as the trooper was thrown through a wooden wall before he reached down to grab one of the trooper's pulse rifles, making sure to seem a little hesitant before readying it.

"Matt, what's been going on here?" asked Hiccup, "Who are these guys really?"

"No idea," lied Matt smoothly.

"Then why are they going after you specifically?" asked Hiccup.

"Fine, we...upset their bosses," said Matt smoothly, "Their bosses are a little bit...evil."

"Apparently," said Hiccup, "We need to get to the others. Without the dragons, we don't stand a chance."

"Ok...erm...can you move to the left? Let's see if I got this right," said Matt, gently pushing Hiccup aside and firing up at one of the roof rims, one of Alicia's men shimmering into view with a groan and falling forward into the dirt.

"What kind of weapon is that anyways?" asked Hiccup.

"No idea, something these Teutonic mercenaries have," lied Matt.

"Mercenaries? That makes sense," said Hiccup, "They don't seem to care as much about looting as pirates."

"Not all mercenaries are like that..." said Matt, sounding a little hurt.

"Ok, once we've regrouped, we should go to the Academy. There's bound to be some spare weapons there we could use," said Hiccup.

"No, you can't fight these guys. Believe me when I say these are well trained and won't even need to chew you to eat you alive," said Matt, peering round a corner.

"Then how are we supposed to get rid of them?" asked Hiccup.

"Get your dragons, these guys don't know how to handle them. Trust me on this," said Matt

"Right, we better get them together quick," said Hiccup, "Do you know where Starflame might be?"

"Don't know...I saw her last at the..." began Matt before a click was heard behind them.

"Got you now you-" began the trooper Matt had KO'ed only for a blue blast to make him 'disappear', Starflame landing a second later.

"Good girl..." said Matt happily, patting her.

Hiccup climbed onto Toothless's back and said, "Let's go find the others. But remember, we're probably a big target for them when we're up in the air so be careful."

"They won't dare...I hope," said Matt, adding the last part to himself and Starflame as Hiccup took off.

...

Chloe pushed a stunned marauder trooper over. "Guys, looks like we got trouble. McNeil must really hold a grudge," she said into her comm, taking advantage of the fact that she was, for now alone.

"Ya think?" said Chris's voice, dripping with sarcasm.

"Ok, these guys are breaking the rules. Return the favor, just look

clueless to start when you grab these idiot guns," said Chloe, tazer shocking a trooper as he stirred with a groan.

"I think NegaMorph may have gotten a head start on that," said Techo, "Found a couple of guys with fangs in their *ahem* tender parts."

"Make sure they stay down. Last thing we need is an EXP outbreak on top of marauder squad," said Chloe.

NegaMorph's voice was heard on the comm, "Hey, I'm not stupid. I've been firing blanks. Well, blank on viruses."

"Ok...I...hold on," said Chloe, hearing footsteps outside the door. She paused until someone opened the door jumping out with the marauder's blaster and yelling. However, she only got yelling back as it was only Mildew. "Oh...it's you. As much as I'd love to see you accidentally shot with these, maybe you should stay in here," Chloe said, pulling Mildew inside.

"What you trying to do?! Give me a heart attack?!" yelled Mildew.

"You gotta have a heart before you can have an attack," said Chloe.

"Urgh...these dragons probably caused this...damn dragon 'unters," complained Mildew before his eyes adjusted to see the slumped troopers.

"Poachers, I'm surprised you guys haven't had problems with them before," said Chloe.

"Don't look like any poachers I've seen...and if they're after the dragons this is another reason to kick em off..." began Mildew before he saw Chloe's glare.

"Don't finish that sentence...and stay here unless you have a death wish."

"What? With those invaders?" asked Mildew.

"They can't harm you unless you're stupid. I on the other hand...hold on," said Chloe, aiming one of the marauder blasters and firing a twin shot into a stirring trooper. Mildew stared at the blaster with shock. "Uh, these Tuetonic weapons sure are advanced," said Chloe, "I wouldn't use any if I were you."

...

Chris peered out to see some of Alicia's men hiding behind some of the boxes, one setting up a tripod. "Oh, this'll hurt," muttered Techo, the two unable to fire back due to the other troopers on overwatch.

"That thing's gonna do some serious damage around here," said Chris, "Of course, since all the buildings are just wood, that's pretty easy."

"Hey...one of the crates are gone," said Techo, double taking and

just avoiding being shot cause Chris dragged him back.

Chris peeped around and said, "Huh, that's odd. I wonder where it went." Then the two of them heard something, the sound of something chewing very loudly with its mouth open. They both peered out in time to see a box vanish into a mouth hidden under the boxes, unnoticed by the troopers. "No...way," said Chris

"Don't they normally eat rocks?" asked Techo.

Chris cracked open the side of a nearby crate and looked inside. "They are full of rocks," said Chris, "The wood probably adds flavor."

"How long do you think before both the dragon and those guys notice each other?" said Techo happily before an annoyed roar was heard.

"Probably a second after one of them steps on its foot," said Chris. Several panicked screams were heard and the troopers ran past them, one holding half a plasma cannon. "And there we go," said Chris amused.

A ball of molten lava flew past them and exploded near some of the troopers. "We probably ought to keep moving now," said Techo.

...

"We got minor resistance...in pursuit!" yelled a trooper into his comm and rubbing his head as he ran while wondering what it took for a Viking, let alone these twins to attack them...then argue...and then attack each other.

Admittedly, the twins were effective warriors...when they weren't fighting each other. "It's my turn to use the axe," snapped Ruffnut.

"Uh, no, you went...two and one and one times," said Tuffnut.

"When did we start counting chops?" asked Ruffnut.

"I don't know."

"Me neither, but it's still my turn."

"Ok, kids, freeze, stop right where you are we will end you, got that?" said one of the troopers, none of them noticing a thick green smoke starting to flow around them from above and behind.

The twins didn't even seem to hear them. "Can't you just use another axe?" asked Tuffnut.

"That's my axe too," said Ruffnut.

"Don't we also have a sword?"

"You blunted it last week."

"No, you blunted it."

"No, you did."

"You did."

"You did."

One of the troopers snapped at that, firing a round into the air. "Look, we're trying to arrest you two brats. At least look at us when we do it," he snapped before sniffing "Ok...who let rip?" he said.

"Hey, it wasn't me," said another trooper.

"He who smelt it dealt it," said the third.

The first one looked down to see a green smoke before looking back to see the twins looking past them. "Oh no," he muttered, turning to look up.

Above them was the two heads of a large dragon, the one on the right spewing out the green gas. The one on the left had its mouth partially open, showing tiny sparks inside.

"Ok...let's all back up...real...slowâ€|" said the first trooper carefully, his helmet happily confirming the gases flammability. However, they both heard the sound of two sets of fingers snapping simultaneously. This apparently was the signal for the dragon to spit sparks into the gas. "RUN!" snapped the trooper just before the gas ignited.

...

Matt peered round a corner before seeing a fireball on the other side of the town. "Fun...you kids know how to play," he said.

"Looks like the twins have Barf and Belch," said Hiccup before noticing lava balls flying in another part, "And Meatlug has plenty of ammo. That leaves Hookfang and Stormfly to find."

"Ok, let's stay together and make sure-" began Matt before he heard a whirring noise and looked down to see a grapple going tight around his foot. "Crap," he managed before being dragged out. Currently, Starflame was about 15 feet off the ground so it wasn't really a lethal fall. Though it had a pretty rough landing on the ground. Matt groaned and muttered, "Ow, my tailbone."

"Get up," said a female voice, distorted through a helmet filter.

Matt looked up to see the marauder commander from about two weeks ago. "Oh, it's you. I might have known," said Matt, "It's Alice, right?"

"Alicia actually. Now as I said...get up," said the marauder as Matt got up before she leapt forward, delivering several blows to Matt's chest that winded him before kicking his leg from under him.

Matt groaned and said, "You're faster than you look."

"Better nanites, better training, get up," said Alicia, motioning for Matt to stand.

"Actually, I'm comfy down here with my burst spleen thank you," said Matt.

"Then let me help you up," said Alicia before grabbing Matt by his shirt front and lifting him off his feet effortlessly.

"Ok, kinda impressive, but I bet you can't throw me very far," said Matt.

"I could cook you," said Alicia casually.

"You're a splitter, aren't you?" said Matt dully before being punched back into the ground.

"Nope, I'm far worse. Sergeant, forget the others. Without a ship, they're stranded..." she said, looking up to see the dragons circling. "And if they try to interfere...kill them after you kill Lynch." she added, loud enough to get their attention.

"You know, as much as I get the whole bounty hunting thing, you aren't giving me much of a fighting chance," said Matt.

"Really? I'm not using guns, they are...kill him," said Alicia, nodding to her men, who took aim...before shuddering as several spines shot into them from above.

Matt looked up to see Astrid flying on Stormfly. "Thanks kid. How about a little of that magnesium fire?" called Matt. Alicia looked up angrily at that, her eyes looking wonky. "You don't look well," said Matt, unable to help himself, only to be grabbed by the throat again.

"Let's go elsewhere." she snapped, tossing Matt over the edge and jumping after her.

"Ok, have it your way," said Matt before morphing into half-dragon form. However, there was a lot of pain when his tail formed. He glanced at it, he could see there was a bad bend in it.

A second later, everything shimmered, several Atlantean runes probably the equivalent of scolding from the healing nanites. "Oh no," he muttered as the rocks loomed large before something grabbed his arm. "Nice one Starfla-oh, it's you...oh, you're avianos. Wouldn't have called that," he said, looking up to see what he presumed was Alicia.

Her alien heritage was a lot more obvious now, with the large feathered wings and the raptor's beak that her helmet had opened up to make room for. "I should drop you and watch you crack like an egg," snapped Alicia, her voice more melodious now before saying, "But the council wants you alive, so that's how you'll be delivered."

Wait, I thought McNeil wanted me dead," said Matt.

"He would prefer to have you dealt with in public," said Alicia, looking down at the rocks.

"Public execution, huh, I would have pegged him for the 'assassination in silence' type," said Matt.

"It's a new world, Lynch, shame you didn't adjust with it," said Alicia coyly before a fireball parted her feathers.

Matt looked up to see Starflame doing a Mach 2 dive at them. "Why adjust when you can have friends?" replied Matt.

"Then she can play catch," said Alicia, letting go and swooping to the side.

Matt frantically tried to change. "C'mon, c'mon, I don't need to completely transform. Just having wings to avoid going splat is acceptable," he said.

"Denied...critical damage still detected in primary form," said the nanite VI's voice.

"C'mon, it's just my coccyx, humans don't really even need them!" snapped Matt.

"Negative...acid burns still present on primary form," said the VI.

"Still? Why couldn't I have gotten the self-repair type of nanites?" griped Matt.

"Self-repair update in progress," said the VI before time, which from Matt's perspective had slowed to a crawl during his 'conversation' returned to normality...just in time to be caught.

"Alright, now let's show that big buzzard what teamwork's really about?" said Matt. Kala rolled her eyes before banking to see Alicia already picking up speed. However, Alicia was swooping down to finish the job, but flying away from the island. "Let her go," said Matt, "We need to clean up after her flunkies."

...

Back in the village, the dragon riders had fully amassed their forces and were forcing the marauders back. Matt's team was helping to, but mostly from the shadows. Literally in NegaMorph's case.

Hiccup and Toothless circled around for another blast at the running marauders when a red beam sliced through one of their saddle's straps. Hiccup began slipping to one side, causing his leg to disconnect from the stirrup. That, unfortunately, caused Toothless to lose control of his flight pattern. The two landed in a dazed heap...on the wrong side of the little skirmish.

Hiccup was first back to consciousness before looking around for Toothless, who was still out before hearing staggering footsteps. "Wait, that's not Lynch, that's the local," said one voice.

"What difference does it make?" snapped another voice.

"Well, for one thing, he's a timeline specific..."

There was a snapping noise at that and a thud. "Never liked rules..." said the second voice, the tone slurred from a growl. Hiccup decided it might be a good idea to back away quietly and subtly from whoever voice that was.

"Wheere are yooo going...mammal?" said the second voice, two yellow eyes appearing around the corner. Hiccup jumped and crawled away from the eyes. "Had...enooooough...of zis world...seeing...realives azz...PETS!" said the second voice, the shadow that was visible flickering.

Hiccup cast his eyes around the area, looking for anything that would make a suitable weapon. "Looking for somethink like zis?" said the figure, holding up a half melted axe, a survivor from the armory before effortlessly ripping the metal blade off

Hiccup gulped and asked, "What are you?"

"Zere is no point in tellink you..." said the figure before a scaly arm shot out and grabbed Hiccup. "How about I show you?" snapped a sharp draconic face. At any other time, Hiccup would have been fascinated with such an unusual dragonlike creature. Right now, he was more worried about how many sharp fangs it had. "Now zen...fresh...or cooked?" said the creature, holding up its other free hand that crackled before they heard a growl. "Oh...your slave is awake..." said the splitter.

"He's not my slave, he's my friend," said Hiccup. Toothless roared angrily before spitting a plasma blast at the creature.

The creature dodged with a fast sidestep. "Impressive...my turn I am thinkink," said the creature, sending a repeating blast of blue lightning out. Toothless tried to dodge the blast, but the metal on his body made him too easy of a target for the lightning. The creature kept the blast going until Toothless slumped down before glaring at Hiccup. "Now zen," he said before there was a crack and the sound of something hitting the wall behind Hiccup.

The creature looked up and asked, "Vhat vas zat?" A second crack was heard at that, the creature gurgling. The reason for the gurgling became quite evident when spurts of blood start gushing out of its throat, more than a few drops falling on Hiccup. Hiccup fell out of the creatures grasp before, with a 'whoosh' it burst into blue flame, reducing itself to nothing but ash in seconds.

Hiccup blinked before saying, "Okay...don't see that every day. Something tells me that wasn't any kind of dragon that's found around here."

Toothless made a weak moaning getting back up again and shaking his head dizzily. Hiccup went over to Toothless and asked, "Are you alright there, bud?" Toothless shook his head to stop his eyes rolling before nodding. Hiccup looked at the scorched tail prosthetic before saying, "Looks like I'll have to build you a new one."

The shooting appeared to have stopped, Hiccup and Toothless walking out to see Matt's men cheering as the remaining Marauders sailed away. Hiccup sighed and said, "Glad that's over." He looked at the houses with smashed roofs, smoking walls, and doors ripped off and muttered, "Dad's gonna have a cow when he sees this."

"No he won't, not your fault we got invaded by human shaped cockroaches," said one of Matt's men, having overheard.

"Yeah, but it's gonna take weeks to fix all this up," said Hiccup.

"Still not your fault," said the man, walking away, his shape flickering briefly.

Hiccup turned to Toothless and said in a low voice, "Those guys are hiding something. They might be on our side, but we should keep an eye on them."

...

Hiccup and the man turned out to be right: Stoick did have a minor cow (he'd brought one back from the meeting place's settlement) but he didn't blame Hiccup. "Nobody could have seen this coming, son," he said, looking out as repairs were begun...and the bonfire where Matt and his men were burning the marauders' weapons.

"I probably should have been more suspicious of those traders," said Hiccup.

"Hiccup, you can't expect the worst from everyone. Otherwise, you'd never be able to make new friends," said Stoick.

"Who taught you that?" asked Hiccup.

"You did," said Stoick.

"We swept the town, nobody's left," said Matt, walking up.

"You think they'll be back?" asked Stoick, "Apparently they had a particular fascination with you and your crew."

"I doubt it...and if they do, we'll deal with them again," said Matt.

Stoick nodded and said, "Well, at least they didn't try to loot us. It's going to take a while to rebuild this village, even with the dragons' help."

"They won't come back. If they do, we'll blast em," said Matt, to himself more or less.

...

Sometime later, the kids were at the Academy, discussing what had happened during the invasion. "One of those marauders was a dragon?" said Astrid, a little shocked.

"It couldn't have been a real dragon," said Hiccup, "For one thing, dragons don't turn to ash after they die."

"Well...it was definitely real," said Fishlegs, looking at the green blood.

"Yeah, I think I'll to take three baths to get rid of it," said

Hiccup with disgust.

"Three baths? That sucks," said Tuffnut, shaking his head.

"Anyways, I'm more concerned about what Lynch and his crew could have done to make those marauders go after them like that," said Hiccup.

"It's worrying. I have a feeling those guys aren't telling us something," said Astrid.

"I have a feeling that they haven't told us anything that's true," said Snotlout.

"We should keep an eye on them," said Astrid, peering over at where two of Matt's men were walking around.

"True, but let's not forget they've been helping us," said Hiccup, "If it wasn't for them, the village would have been completely destroyed."

"Then we'll be careful," said Astrid, none of them noticing how Starflame was staring in horror.

* * *

><p>Another chapter up. And things are starting to look pretty unstable for the gang's disguises. This is hardly the last we see of the Marauders and they won't be coming back to play marbles. But will the gang's cover be blown before that happens? Who's to say? Keep an eye out for next week's update and please review.<p>

6. An Arm for an Arm

****Voyagers Saga****

****Broken Nest****

****Chapter 6: An Arm for an Arm****

****Author's note: From this chapter on, there will be mentioning of graphic violence, swearing, and other mature themes. Consider them a T rating.**
>

With the excavation of the Hyperion battlecruiser was still underway, Chip decided to make more of his time by working on getting the scanners to full power. "Error...emitter power unaligned," chimed the subroutine, causing Chip to facepalm before looking around at the VR representation of the AI system control.

"I'm starting to understand how some AIs can go mad," said Chip as he tried to work on realigning the energy flow. He may have to go to manual for this.

"Emitter 4 realigned...scanning...alert. Tier 0 technology detected at range," said the subroutine, a screen appearing to show a wire model map with a red dot pulsating.

"Tier 0? Here? It might be something Atlantean," said Chip, "Let's see if I can get a little more focus."

"Unable to comply...emitter power below needed parameters," said the subroutine.

"And I'm going to need permission from the captain to reroute power," said Chip, "I hope he's not too busy right now."

...

Matt was busy...being lazy if the chainsaw snores were any indication. A small pile of ice was forming on him from where it was being shaken from the roof of his room when Chip turned on the base cam to peer at him.

"I might have known," said Chip's voice over the intercom, "Computer control calling Captain Matt, come in, captain." Matt just snorted before scratching his head and continuing to snore. "Well, I guess I have to exact whatever methods necessary to get his attention," said Chip before flipping on the emergency klaxon.

To his shock, Matt just turned over. "Wow, he can really sleep," he muttered before getting an idea. "Matt...I've got coffee," he whispered via Matt's wrist comp, causing Matt to shoot upright.

"Chip, no coffee for you!" snapped Matt.

"Now that I have your waking attention, I think you'll want to see this," said Chip.

Matt stared at the screen for a second before saying faintly, "Zoom out...show me orbit."

"I have a limited orbital range," said Chip, "I can't even reach the moon."

"Just do it!" snapped Matt.

"Ok," said Chip before zooming out to the edge of the stratosphere.

"Warning...Tier 0 technology detected at stratospheric limit," said the subroutine, a fuzzy image of one of Taleth's ships visible hovering alongside another...more terrifying ship. "Dark ones...that's all we need," said Matt.

"Shouldn't they be attacking each other?" asked Chip.

"I know, that's what worries me," said Matt.

"Shouldn't we start fortifying the base before they attack?" asked Chip.

"They won't be after us. I doubt they even know we're here. They'll want that tech," said Matt.

"I'll start preparing the North Star for liftoff immediately," said Chip.

"What? You can barely get it airborne as it is. No, we'll have to be sneakier, get Chloe and Techo," said Matt

...

Chloe and Techo showed up as fast as they could when they found out about the situation. "If both Taleth and the Dark Ones are here, that tech must be something special," said Techo.

"Yeah, maybe a ship...or something we can use to get out of here for good. The only problem we have is getting there. That longboat would take weeks to get there. By then, the tech'll be long gone," said Chloe, "The North Star has more than a few repair problems. We'd probably crash halfway there. That just leaves..."

"You two need some rides," said Matt, grinning.

"Uh, Starflame may be nice, but I'd rather not going through that bonding thing myself," said Techo.

"Tough. You two shouldn't have laughed," said Matt.

"Matt, we don't have time to find our own dragons," said Chloe, "Not to mention we'll be having enough difficulties with Starflame once the ship is up and running."

"Then how else do you expect to get there? Starflame's not carrying you all and neither am I. I still can't change," snapped Matt.

Techo looked thoughtful before saying, "Maybe we can call on the local taxi service."

...

"We just want to head over to the mainland, see who sent those...mercenaries," said Matt.

"Are you sure that's a good idea?" asked Stoick, "You'd be on their territory where they'll have the advantage. And I won't be sending any of the young ones, especially my son, into imminent danger without good reason."

"We'll stop them at source," said Matt, promptly.

Chloe added, "Your son and his friends will be in safe hands."

"I can still think of several ways this could go horribly wrong," said Stoick.

"He'll be safe," said Matt.

Stoick gave Matt a stern look before saying, "If anything happens to my son, there will be no corner of this world that you can hide in."

"Ok," whimpered Matt, backing up a step.

...

Hiccup, Astrid, and Snotlout watched as Matt and his two companions got the last of their gear off their boat. "So, this supposed to be a treasure hunt or what?" asked Snotlout.

"Weren't you listening?" asked Astrid.

"I kinda trailed off after blah, blah, blah," said Snotlout.

Matt and co walked up at that, Matt dripping after Starflame had tackled him off the dock again. "Ok...so who's my ride?" said Chloe cheerfully.

"I'll give you a lift," said Snotlout, "All it costs is a kiss."

Chloe cocked her head at that, apparently puzzled, while behind her, Matt and Techo seemed to panic. "Did you just hit on me?" Chloe said politely.

"Well, if you want to think of it that way," said Snotlout.

Chloe smiled the smile that usually has a fin on top and heads for drowning seals. "Come here," she said, in a tone that caused Matt to stare.

Snotlout, however, was oblivious to the imminent danger. "Oh, you wanna hit on me back?" he said as he walked over.

Chloe shook her head before saying "Close your eyes." Snotlout closed his eyes and puckered up, causing Astrid to roll her eyes. A second later, a punch caused Snotlout to spin like a top and stop on his back, Hookfang sniggering as Chloe hissed, "Hit on me again and I will break you like a twig...ok?"

"Ok," said Snotlout weakly.

Astrid sighed and said, "Chloe, you can ride with me. I wouldn't mind having some girl time."

"Cool, Techo, you're with Romeo over here. I don't trust my brother not to kill him," said Chloe.

"She's his brother?" asked Snotlout weakly.

"Isn't it obvious?" asked Hiccup.

...

Taleth and Seleni walked through the hall. "I don't know why we don't simply kill that fat slob and take the starter key." Seleni complained

"It's called 'good form'," said Taleth, "It was separates us from all the other looting ravages who would call themselves 'pirates'."

"It's boring, that's what it is," snapped Seleni before the two stopped and saw the agreed reason: the two Ashen warriors standing outside a guestroom. The two groups had literally ran into each other when they had arrived.

The four of them snarled and instinctively reached for their sidearms. Then Taleth managed to get some control over himself and said, "Seleni, we must not forget. We are guests in the Duke's castle. We wouldn't want to show disrespect to his property."

"Huh, insectoid scum and their pet zombies," Seleni muttered.

"Reptilian mongrels," hissed one of the Ashen warriors.

"That...iz...enough...these...creatures...are not enemies," said the distorted voice of their commander, wearing a skinsuit and looking uncomfortable.

Seleni gave a smirk and said, "I must learn your diet program. The way you squeeze down is something some girls would kill for."

The Ashen looked confused before stopping "You...attempt humor...we will take the akata-latiz. You will fail."

"Your enunciation is almost as bad as your breath," said Seleni.

"Your DNA is broken. Our technology will be welcomed by baron and safely shut down in one cycle. Your genetic technology will damage timeline," snapped the Ashen.

"You'd think we'd be thoughtless enough to leave our powers lying around for some backwater primitives to toy around with?" said Taleth, sounding insulted, "You know nothing about how we operate."

"No, but the jury rigged serum you offered as payment is dangerous," snapped the Ashen.

"As if you would know anything about it," said Taleth, "I didn't see you use your microscope when we presented it."

"Your technology is primitive. We see things different, hybrid," said the Ashen calmly.

"Right, like you have built in x-ray and microscopic vision," said Seleni sarcastically.

"We are not mammals," said the Ashen smugly before walking back into the guest room

Seleni glared after them and said, "We should have made extra sure that we had squashed them all ages ago."

"Enough, look, bug, that ship is Atlantean property," snapped Taleth.

"And you have proven to be very careless caretakers," said the commander before shutting the door.

One of Taleth's men strode up at that. "Sir, we have a problem. The wreckage was definitely Lynch's ship. Nobody else writes 'touch it

and die' under the name plate," he muttered.

"The only surprise is that it happens to be in this system, and even that's a small surprise," said Taleth, "I'm afraid the current arrangement demands our full attention. We'll attend to Lynch after we've finished our business."

"Well, sir, I tuned the scanner to check. Three NSC nanite signals are approaching...high speed. They'll be at the coast by nightfall," said the trooper

"Always too nosy for his own good," said Taleth, "I think we can arrange a welcoming party. With luck, we can stage this as an attempt on the baron's life. That should make him more eager to listen to us."

"I'll have a team ready to take him..." began the trooper only for Taleth to say "Are you brain-dead? He'll go through you easily. Seleni will lead your team."

Seleni grinned and said, "And I thought this mission was just going to be dull."

...

The group had set up a camp on a cliff near the coast. "Ok, we'll set up camp here and then head east for the nearest town," said Matt, the group around a fire with the dragons.

"What exactly are we looking for again?" asked Snotlout.

"Do you ever pay attention to what I'm saying? We're looking for Ta-...whoever sent those guys to attack us," said Matt

"Didn't you say you guys did something to tick them off? You sure finding them is a good idea?" asked Hiccup.

"Cut the head off the snake," said Chloe, causing everyone to look, "Standard strategy: take out the leader and the soldiers have no orders."

"That makes sense, but going into their base doesn't," said Astrid.

"Trust me. We can do this. Nobody ever see's us coming," said Chloe.

"So, what exactly did you do to make these guys mad?" asked Hiccup.

"Not much...difference of opinion...maybe we insulted their boss..." said Matt, Chloe muttering "Multiple times."

"And what's this guy's name?" asked Astrid.

"Councilman McNeil..." said Techo before covering his mouth.

Chloe and Matt looked surprised at that. "I woulda thought I'd have been the one to screw up," Matt said.

"McNeil? Then what are we doing in Germany? Shouldn't we be in Scotland or Ireland?" asked Hiccup.

"He...travels," said Chloe innocently, Starflame facepawing.

â€|

"Nobody's going to fall for that,"_ said Kala to Toothless

"Snotlout, maybe. But I think Hiccup and Astrid are too smart for that,"_ said Toothless.

"Yeah, they're doomed...of all the times not to have a mindwipe glove,"_ said Kala.

"Maybe now's a good time to try and tell Matt who you really are,"_ suggested Toothless, "_He's probably more open to suggestion."_

Kala shrugged before wandering over.

...

Matt and the group were waiting to see if it took when Starflame nudged Matt. "Not now, Starflame," muttered Matt. Starflame glared and nudged Matt again. "Starflame, this is not a good time," muttered Matt. Starflame snapped at that before chomping on Matt's head.

The others watched with some amusement as Matt was shaken around. "She has got to be the second moodiest dragon I've ever seen," said Techo.

Starflame settled for slamming Matt on the ground until he was embedded before letting go and glaring at him. "Ok, you have my attention, what do you want?" said Matt in a strained tone.

Starflame looked around before seeming to mime something. "What is she doing?" asked Astrid.

"I think she's trying to tell Matt something," said Hiccup.

"Erm...you want a sandwich?" said Matt, the others wincing as Starflame seemed to twitch before slamming Matt around again.

"You're ice cold, Lynch," said Techo.

"Oooow..." moaned Matt as Starflame grabbed a branch and began drawing an arrow on the group before leaping in front of it smugly.

Matt managed to turn himself over before seeing that Starflame had clearly written the word 'KALA' in the dirt. "What? Kala? You know where Kala is?" asked Matt. Starflame nodded before tapping the arrow beside her. "She's that way?" said Matt, carefully.

Starflame's smugness promptly vanished and she let out an angry roar

before blasting Matt point-blank with a fireball before running off. "Yeah...I don't think that was the answer," said Chloe weakly before stopping, saying "What was that?"

"My skin roasting, I'll peel it off next week," said Matt.

"What was that?" said Hiccup before a snapping was heard.

"What WAS that?" said Astrid, grabbing her axe.

Snotlout was picking at his nails with a dagger and hadn't been listening at all. "Ok, no one can be that naturally apt at ignoring unless there was something wrong with their head," said Techo.

Matt came round before hearing a rapidly approaching whistling. His instincts took over and a plasma blast shot out to incinerate the approaching arrow.

Matt sat up before noticing the other kids staring at him. "What?" he asked.

"Did you just destroy that arrow with magic?" asked Astrid.

"Erm...yes..." said Matt, innocently before seeing a dozen or so men-at-arms running up. "HALT, IN THE NAME OF THE DUKE."

"What Duke?" asked Matt, looking around, "Someone lose their dog?" On cue two of the larger men-at-arms tackled him down. "Ok, now I'm just gonna have to rough you up," said Matt. With that, he flung the two of them off. "Ok, who's next?" he said.

A second later, an arrow shot into his leg. Time stood still for a second before Matt twitched and let out a surprisingly high-pitched scream, hopping around until he was tackled again.

"Oh, like he was never shot before," said Techo sarcastically, "I mean, it's a primitive arrow, how much could that-" There was a 'thuk' before an arrow landed in his fleshy arm. Techo looked at it before saying, "Ow, that was, ow, right there."

...

Kala was sobbing next to a stream when the other dragons wandered up. _"Kala, it'll be ok,"_ said Toothless, _"Matt has to figure it out at some point."_

"NO HE WOOOON'T! HE'S A MORON!" wailed Kala.

"He might be...overlooking at times, but he will see who you are," said Stormfly, _"You two are destined for each other."_

"You don't know him like I do. He once read a map upside down for half an hour without noticing," snapped Kala.

Hookfang chuckled at that, causing Stormfly and Toothless to give him disapproving looks. _"What? It's funny,"_ said Hookfang. A high pitched scream was heard at that, causing all four dragons to vibrate in pain. "Ow, what was that?" asked Hookfang.

"There's only one person I know of who squeals in pain like that," said Kala, _"Well, one human I know of."_

"Who?" asked Toothless, weakly before Kala charged off, screaming _"I'M COMING TO SAVE YOU, BUSHI BU!"_

"Do all dragonesses flip flop like that or just the ones who are actually aliens?" asked Hookfang.

The four arrived to see the group surrounded, Matt under a dog pile and tied up and the others backing up. Another figure was strolling forward and Kala found the smell familiar. Kala snarled before charging at the figure.

The figure turned, allowing Kala a view of the figure's face, causing her to skid, allowing the figure to send a blast of lightning into her chest. The blast was enough to send Kala flipping backwards and crash into the other dragons who were arriving.

Toothless was first up only to hear the figure saying "Ok...you twist the orb once around like so." before throwing a metal orb towards the dragons. Toothless was about to jump when several arcs of lightning shot out of the orb. His last vision was of the figure sending a golden orb into one of the duke's men as he aimed a crossbow.

...

Not too far away, the other team was watching Lynch's group get capture and weren't completely happy. "I can't believe we missed it," said Seleni, "I never should have taken your directions."

"They musta been tracking him too," said Janeth, in his dragon form before saying, "That local variant that attacked first. Did she smell familiar?"

"You have the better nose, you tell me," said Seleni.

"It's...it's Kai, I'm certain," said Janeth

"Kai? I know she wasn't the sharpest knife, but she wouldn't have done so amateurish as to enter the reality field the wrong way," said Seleni.

"I doubt it was intentional. We'd better report back," said Janeth before seeing Seleni's glare. "Now!" he roared in her ear.

"Fine, whatever," said Seleni before they flew off.

...

Matt woke with a groan to see he was in, as Chip had once joked, his 'natural environment': a cell. "Well, this is just great," grumbled Matt, wincing as his arrow wound throbbed.

"The screaming one's awake. Lord Taleth will want to see him. Go tell the Duke he's awake," muttered one of the guards.

"Hey, who are you calling screaming one?" demanded Matt.

"You, you scream like my daughter," said the guard sternly.

"Come over here and say that," snapped Matt.

"No chance. Lord Taleth and Lord Xinthi said you can kill with your little finger," said the guard, proving he had a moderate IQ.

"Of course it would be Taleth," muttered Matt.

Matt glared anyway before hearing a clank and looking down to see he had more chains and metal on then most mech armors. "Oh...and we quadruple-locked your chains," said the guard casually.

"What makes you think I can't break out of them anyways?" said Matt, pulling at his chains.

"Because if you do, I'll tear your head off," said a familiar voice, Matt turning gloomily to see Seleni at the top of the stairs.

"Oh...it's you," he said dully.

"I must really thank you for showing up," said Seleni, "Watching Taleth negotiate around with the Dark Ones was getting pretty dull."

"Oh, let me guess, Taleth wants to torture me horribly?" said Matt dully.

"Yep, I wanted to do most of it, but Taleth insists we let the new blood have a chance," said Seleni, sounding a little disappointed.

"New blood? Kai's K.I.A. Have you forgot already?" said Matt.

"Nope, I'd be dancing on her grave if she had one," said Seleni, "Taleth meant the one that came before her."

"Wait, what? You planned the whole Avalar thing in advance?" said Matt, genuinely surprised.

"Maybe, maybe not, I'm not the one who's supposed to be giving information, you are," said Seleni.

"What information? The NSC wants to kill us. There's a queue to dance on my grave at the moment." said Matt as the guards opened the gate.

"Well, Taleth would like to know where the rest of your friends are, but he's more interested as to where you got that nanite upgrade," said Seleni.

"Nanites'r'us. It was three for one Friday," said Matt sarcastically.

...

Kala and the other dragons had been chained in a pen in the courtyard, several of Taleth's warriors on guard. A good idea as it turned out if the angry looks from the castle inhabitants were any

indication. _"Urgh...I hate Dark Ones..."_ she grumbled.

"They don't look that dark," said Hookfang, _"They look pretty pale actually."_

"That's because Techo theorized they're reanimated corpses," said Kala casually. The dragons looked to see four of the Dark Ones' warriors passing by, walking in perfect unnatural symmetry. _"See? Living people don't walk like that,"_ said Kala, noticing how the warrior guards tensed up. On cue the Dark Ones stopped too before seemingly losing interest and continuing, one of them staring past them.

"What is he looking at?" asked Stormfly, turning her head to keep him with her line of vision.

"I dunno. Those guys are basically drones, got the free will and curiosity of a cabbage," said Kala, curiously noticing how the drone finally shook his head before walking after his companions. Kala and the others finally turned to see what had got the drone's attention and seeing a woman frogmarching Matt along.

Kala snarled before throwing herself forward, even though her chains kept her back. Seleni turned at that, looking directly at Kala before grinning and drawing a finger across her throat before pushing Matt onwards.

"She is in so much trouble when I get my claws on her," snarled Kala.

"You know her? She smells weird," said Hookfang.

Seleni turned to give them one last nasty smile, allowing her eyes to flash acid green, causing the dragons except Kala to jump back.

"That's cause she's about as human as we are," said Kala, unable to stop herself grinning at the other's expressions.

...

Matt was pushed into a...well, a rather nice room actually, Taleth sitting back on the bed with a smug look. "Oh look what the wyvern dragged in," he said smugly.

Matt glanced around before saying, "Ghoulwurm's not here."

"Oh Janeth, let's start the fun. Rip that piece of junk off his arm," said Taleth calmly, pointing to Matt's wrist computer.

Janeth calmly walked over before yanking Matt's wristcomp off, breaking it into a few more than two pieces. "Hey, I don't break your stuff," snapped Matt.

"I'm sorry..." muttered Janeth in a tone that made Matt think it didn't refer to his broken wristcomp. Taleth slapped his hands together before saying "Ok, let's get to work. Keenai, come on in."

Matt looked up to see a young woman walk in. She looked rather pretty, though her chalky skin, snow white hair, and pink eyes were a little unsettling. There was also something vaguely familiar about

her.

"Have we met?" asked Matt.

The woman smiled and said in a distinct Irish accent, "Nae, you woulda remembered if we had."

"Ok, you sure? You look like someone I know." said Matt before leaning back as Keenai leaned in.

"I'd wager you've met one of me kin before," said Keenai, "I've heard you were a far-traveled one."

"Come to think, your accent is familiar," said Matt curiously before Taleth said "Give him a lungful please, my dear."

Keenai grinned before she started trilling in a high-pitched tone. Matt wasn't impressed until it suddenly felt like all his nerves were trying to work themselves out of his skin. "Ow...OWOWOWOWOWOWOWOW!" yelled Matt before screaming as his form rippled into his hybrid form.

Taleth smiled before raising a hand to signal Keenai to stop. He unstopped his ears and said, "Keenai is a rather unique specimen. Typically, we try to recruit new Shar-Virk from humans, but Keenai was something more...special."

"The...fuck? You...morphed...a siren?" said Matt, panting.

"Nae, not a siren, though I can be as pleasant as one," said Keenai in a more sultry tone. Matt's nerves reacted to her voice again, this time almost going numb from relaxation.

"Erm, Keenai, I wouldn't do...that," said Janeth, dully as Matt spasmed before his eyes went red.

"Who the smeg are you? Why are we in chains? Oh, why can't I be the dominant one?" moaned 'Matt'.

"We can discuss that later, Draconus, but I need to talk to Matt right now," said Taleth.

"What if I don't wanna back down?" retorted Draconus.

"Then Keenai will have to persuade you," said Taleth before nodding to her. Keenai took a deep breath before letting out a piercing scream.

Draconus snapped before headbutting Keenai in terror. Keenai stopped screaming as she was buffeted. She winced before glaring and growling, "You'll pay for that," her voice causing Draconus's nerves to spasm.

"Keenai, not yet," said Taleth sharply before pushing her aside. "Now, down to business: why is the NSC here?" he said calmly.

Draconus groaned before saying, "What's it to ya?"

"Why...are...they...here?" snapped Taleth only to be shocked as Draconus said "To kill us."

"Been making too much trouble for your bosses, haven't you?" said Seleni.

"Who cares?" said Draconus before twitching as Matt took over again.

"I knew you had few scruples, Taleth, but converting a banshee into a Shar-Virk, that's plain nuts," said Matt.

"She's perfect, though she doesn't have an other. We added that later on," said Taleth, laughing as Matt tried to tear free.

"Not ta mention I have an even rarer type of dragon," said Keenai, "One of the most terrible kinds of all: a dragon of fear."

"Oh...met one," said Matt calmly, causing everyone to sweatdrop.

"Then you would know how Keenai can strip away what's left of your sanity layer by layer," said Taleth.

"You get me down and up comes Draconus to tear you all apart. Deal with him and back I come to blast you all," said Matt with some worrying logic.

"Well, so much for the psychological torture," said Seleni with glee, "Can we move on to the physical stuff now?"

"By all means," said Taleth.

...

In comparison to the others, Hiccup, Astrid and Snotlout were getting the 5-star service.

"This isn't so bad," said Snotlout as he relaxed on a soft bed.

"What about Matt and the others?" said Hiccup, looking out the window sadly to where the dragons were.

"Why is it we're being treated better than them?" asked Astrid.

"Maybe they don't like hurting kids," said Snotlout.

The trio looked over to the fully suited figure standing outside their door. "We're prisoners too," said Hiccup, "Our cell may be better padded, but it's still a cell."

"Negative...I am here for your protection," intoned the warrior in a neutral voice.

"Protection from what?" asked Astrid.

"Species 212 hybrids within zone...threat level high. No further information available," said the warrior.

"What the heck does that mean?" asked Snotlout.

"No further data," said the warrior before stepping smartly in the way as the kids walked forward.

"We can take this loony, it's three against one," whispered Snotlout.

"He's probably tougher than he looks," whispered Astrid, "We need to catch him by surprise."

Oddly enough, said surprise occurred when someone in another room started screaming. The warrior turned to look at the scream's direction before turning back to see the kids were running away.

...

Taleth and Xindri were both before the Duke, presenting their offerings when Xindri tensed up. "What?" he rasped.

"Pardon?" asked the Duke.

"It seems that the Vikings have escaped security," said Xindri.

"How could you know?" asked the Duke.

"I think the more important question is how could this have happened under your guardsman's watch?" said Taleth smugly.

"Screams from your quarters," said Xindri smugly.

Taleth scoffed at that, "Hah, at least my men know how to guard. The Duke's men could do better."

"No one could do better than us," snapped Xindri, "Especially the poorly organized minions of this bloated frog!"

The Duke paused at this, Taleth smirking at Xindri before the Duke said calmly, "Get out."

"If you'd allow me a moment to explain..." started Xindri.

"I said out!" snapped the Duke.

Xindri glared before saying "You have made a bad mistake. Never trust a reptile." before walking out, snapping his fingers and causing his escort to fall in step behind him.

Taleth turned to the duke and said, "Some people don't know when to let an insult slide."

"Fine, you still haven't said why you want my jewel," said the Duke.

Taleth shrugged. "It's...a curiosity," he said, his smile vanishing as the Duke smirked "Then you won't mind increasing your offer."

"Sir, you've already been promised what the jewel is worth. If you insist on an increased offer, you'll have given up more of yourself," said Taleth.

"I am the duke here. If you cannot meet my demands, I will simply recall your opposition again. Now go away and think your position over," said the Duke.

Taleth glowered before turning away. This was nothing but a game to the Duke, but soon he'll find himself the loser.

...

Hiccup and Astrid peered around the corner to see their guard still looking for them though he seemed twitchy, talking with an annoyed tone and more human. "C'mon kids...come on out. This is not a good place to get lost," it called.

"Maybe Snotlout is right, maybe he is loony," whispered Astrid.

The warrior's head span round at that, looking in their direction. "Hey...get back here!" he called.

"Run," whispered Hiccup before they both bolted.

"Hey!" snapped the warrior, running after them...and getting tripped by Astrid, rolling and slamming into a door.

"Ow..." moaned the warrior as started getting up. However, his helmet had a big crack in it that ran down the front and apparently, it was keeping him from seeing clearly. The trio stared to see what looked like a roman Nubian slave...though one of his eyes was a milky white and the other had a translucent piece of glowing glass over the other.

"Ok, at least this guy is human...I think," said Hiccup nervously.

"There you are...get back here!" snapped the man, heading up to them angrily.

Of course, the two of them promptly ran in the other direction. "So, do we have a plan or are we just going to keep running from him?" asked Astrid.

"Dammit, kids, I said STOP!" snapped the warrior, a golden orb shooting out his gauntlet and over their heads. Hiccup and Astrid quickly stopped in their tracks, pretty sure that the orb would explode or something. The shot did just that, blowing through the wall and leaving an orb sized hole. "There...NOW will you stop running?" said the man, walking forward

Astrid lifted her fists up and said, "You're not taking us back without a fight."

"Don't make me..." began the warrior before there was a clang and he fell forward.

This revealed Snotlout standing behind him with a mace in his hand. "Did you see that? That was a perfect strike," said Snotlout.

"Good, let's go before he wakes up," said Astrid, pulling Snotlout past the stunned guard.

"Right, we need to get our dragons so we can bust everyone out," said Hiccup.

"Hey...who let you out?" said a voice, several guardsmen walking heading into view with one of the other 'visitors' troopers, its staff pointed at them

"Oh, not again," moaned Snotlout.

"Out of the frying pan and into the fire," said Hiccup as the guardsmen approached.

"Who's that?" said the staff owner, pointing at the stunned figure.

Snotlout quickly hid the mace behind his back and said, "I don't know. He was like this when I found him."

The man glared turning to aim. "Put the mace down, 'dragon trainer'," he said, saying the last word like it was an insult.

"Snotlout, maybe you should do what he says," said Hiccup.

Snotlout said sulkily "A Viking never drops his weapon." causing Astrid and Hiccup to facepalm.

The trooper shrugged, "Fine, the Vikings are all yours. We were going to kill them anyway."

"You see? It wouldn't have been a good idea to drop it anyways," said Snotlout before holding up his mace and shouting, "Who wants a whack first?"

The trooper shrugged and a golden orb blasted out his staff, vaporizing the tip of the mace. "Like I said, all yours," he said, the men at arms smiling coldly and drawing their swords.

"Uh, Hiccup, we have Plan B, right?" asked Snotlout.

Their attackers stepped calmly over the unconscious warrior...who was beginning to stir as his mace bruise was seen visibly vanishing.

...

Alert...Hive connection lost...memory suppressants offline...Drone 21-B classified as rogue...transmitting comm to HiveMaster Xindri

...

Xindri was returning to his quarters when one of his technicians contacted him. "Commander, we've just learned that one of the new drones has been disconnected and has probably gone rouge."

"This is all we need. We barely got any before Darkans evacuated

that...disaster. Inform Warmaster Darkans and prepare to leave orbit. If they do activate the golden barge, we will want to be long gone," said Xindri

"Are we sure we want to abandon the akata-latiz?" asked the technician.

"To quote a mammal verse: Screw it!" snapped Xindri.

...

As the warrior became more awake, the repressing programs and protocols in his head faded, allowing a flood of memories to come back in.

...

"Any last words?" said one of the guards before a voice behind them yelled "GODDAMMIT!"

Everyone turned to look at the warrior getting back up, his visible eye regaining color and his skin becoming less pale.

"Dumb Ashen warriors," said the trooper, firing a blast into the waker's chest, knocking him back on his back. "Now as for you..." started the trooper before the first one got back up.

"That hurt," he said in a very cross tone.

"Oh hell..." began the trooper before he was punched off his feet.

"Ok...who's next, you smegheads?" said the warrior. The guardsmen had lost a fair amount of their confidence and were backing up. "Anyone?" said the warrior peering around before smirking and saying "Boo." The guards screamed before running away, a couple of them dropping their swords.

"I love it when they do that," said the warrior smugly before noticing the first one getting back up again. "I thought Taleth learnt his lesson the first time we kicked your asses," he said conversationally.

"Shut your mouth, Ashen scum," snapped the trooper as he aimed his staff at the figure.

The 'Ashen scum' seemed surprised and puzzled at that. "What's an Ashen?" he said.

The trooper didn't answer that question, or at least in a civil way. He just blasted the warrior back again.

"You're not so tough. The Ashen must have been picking for scraps when they selected you. You'd be better off rotting in your grave," said the trooper before moving in to finish him off.

He was about to fire before there was a rapid 'blakblak' noise, white smoke rising from his back before he fell forward. The warrior had sat back up and was looking at the large gauntlets on his arms, one of them having fired the shot that ended the trooper. "Ok, where did

these come from?" he asked.

"You saved us though," said Astrid as the warrior got up.

"Ok...first off I want some answers. 1: Who the hell are you guys. 2: Where the hell did that volcano and the Heartless go? 3: Why am I wearing this high-tech crap?" he said.

"What volcano?" asked Hiccup.

"Who are the Heartless?" asked Astrid.

"What are these things?" asked Snotlout, poking the figure's gauntlet.

"Hey, even I don't know what they are, no touching," snapped the warrior before saying, "Name's Wilson...wish Lynch was around here. He's insane but somehow everything works out."

"You know Matt?" asked Hiccup.

"He's my boss. Wait, I know that look. You've heard him singing," said Wilson sternly.

"Er..." started Hiccup.

...

A few weeks ago

Every dragon in the village was running/flying away as far they could from the mead hall. Quite a few villagers followed after them, covering their ears as they ran. Hiccup and the others peered out, clutching their ears to see Matt apparently singing to Starflame, who was the only one apparently enjoying this ear-based agony.

...

"Oh, yeah...we've heard itâ€¦" said Hiccup with a shudder.

"Then you probably know where he is," said Wilson.

"He's in this castle and being interrogated," said Astrid.

"Good, now why'd Taleth's buddy call you dragon trainers?" said Wilson, peering around a corner.

"Uh...cause we are?" said Snotlout.

"Aw man, not more of em. Lynch'll kill me...again if we don't get your buddies. Let's just listen for the shouting," said Wilson.

"Well, we better hurry," said Astrid, "Who knows what kind of tortures they could be inflicting on Matt."

"Believe me, we wanna pity his captors. Matt's the only guy who annoyed some captors into PAYING us to rescue him," said Wilson.

"I'd have to see that to believe it," said Snotlout.

"Don't worry, we'll hear the explosions. We'll probably need help though. Hmm...where's the dungeons?" said Wilson.

...

Chloe and Techo had spent most of the time in a separate dungeon from Matt...in neighboring cells. "I hear yer brother upset the Duke's new friend," said one of the guards to Chloe, sneering.

"He upsets a lot of people," said Chloe casually, "Though it'd probably be a bit quick to say your duke has a new friend."

"Lord Taleth's going to give the Duke the magic needed to rule the Teutonic kingdom easily," gloated the other guard.

"Magic? You're not serious, are you?" asked Chloe, showing a slight bit of concern.

"Indeed, it was perfect," said the first guard with a laugh adding "Maybe they're testing them on yer friend?" before there was the sounds of several clunks and a clanking noise from the stairs leading up to the castle...followed by footsteps.

"Heads up, we've got company," said one of the guards.

Chloe and Techo peered over too before backpedalling to the back of their cells as a familiar shape came down into the dungeon. "Hey...I thought all those left," said one of the guards.

"Get away from that. It's gonna kill us," gibbered Techo before stopping as the helmeted figure said "I'm sorry, is this the cafeteria?" before raising both gauntlets and blasted the two guards.

"Wait a second, I know that voice..." said Chloe.

"Hey boss, I'd stand back, still getting the hang of these killer gloves," said the 'drone warrior', blasting the locks out.

"Wilson...but you're dead..." said Techo weakly before he fell backwards, out cold

"I'm really tempted to do that to," said Chloe, "Last we saw, you were trapped in a cave fighting Heartless."

"Last thing I remember. Next thing I know I'm wearing this crap, useful though. One of Taleth's little plasma staff things didn't even scratch it," said Wilson, dragging Techo out by his foot.

"Er, you do realize that 'crap' is the same stuff the Dark Ones use, right?" asked Chloe.

"Hey, I've apparently been dead for the last month or two, give a dude a break. By the way, who are these three? Taleth's goons wanted to ice em," said Wilson.

Chloe looked at the kids and gave a sigh of relief. "Thank goodness you're alright," she said.

"Yeah, I think it's high time you give us some answers, real answers," said Hiccup.

"Ok, it's probably easier to wait till we're not in mortal danger..." began Chloe only for Astrid to snap "No, we want answers now."

Chloe sighed before saying, "Ok, but you won't believe me the first time. The truth is that all of us are actually from other worlds. And not Asgard or Jotunheim or whatever other Norse worlds, but from a different universe entirely."

The others stared before Snotlout said finally, "Prove it."

Wilson grinned, "He did say too, boss lady. It's all you."

"Watch carefully," said Chloe before morphing into her half-dragon form.

The trio immediately jumped back as Wilson laughed. "Yeah, I'm surprised they kept it secret this long with their track record," he laughed.

Chloe gave him an annoyed look and said, "We were doing good until the Marauders showed up."

"Marauder division? Why the hell are they after you...what did Matt do this time?" said Wilson.

"That's an almost-as-long explanation and I'll indulge everyone as soon as we get out of here," said Chloe.

Techo came round with a groan then. "Urgh...hey, who shot the ga...uuuurgh dead guy!" he groaned before passing out again as he saw Wilson.

"Is he gonna be like this all day?" asked Wilson in an annoyed tone.

"Let's just go. Take the kids and get their dragons back. Me and Techo'll get my brother," said Chloe.

...

Elsewhere, an unspeakable sonic torturing was going on in another room that shouldn't be subjected to the ears of mortals who don't deserve it. The strange part would have been that the person doing the torturing was the one who was supposed to be being tortured. "Thank you...and for my next number...40,000 bottles of beer," said Matt happily.

Seleni's eyes were watering with pain. "Please, no more, no more..." she whined.

Keenai was looking at Matt with astonishment, "That had to have been the worse singin' I've ever heard. Even I've never managed to get a note so horribly painful."

"Why thanks, it's genetic," said Matt before bursting into song again, causing Seleni to vibrate visibly.

"Are you sure ya can't teach me to sing like that?" asked Keenai.

"No, I just sing...wait. You're evil, why would I help you?" said Matt, pausing in his singing, much to Seleni's relief.

"But ye make such a perfectly horrible wailin', I must learn how ta match it," said Keenai.

"No," said Matt childishly.

"C'mon, I can make it worth your while," said Keenai in a coy tone that sent shivers down Matt's nerves.

"No...not a chance," said Matt, trying to inch back.

"I have ye've misplaced yer mate, maybe I can fill in for her," said Keenai, getting uncomfortably close. Matt began to twitch, Seleni noticing this and almost tempted to warn Keenai of the imminent violence about to occur. "Ooh, ye're so tense, maybe I can loosen you up a bit," said Keenai, rubbing Matt's shoulders.

Seleni counted under her breath...as far as 2 before a kick sent Keenai flying. "Oh, I musta forgot to tie his feet," she muttered before noticing Matt was in a cold sweat, patches of metal on his left arm. "Lynch, you don't seem too well," said Seleni, "Quite a nasty rash you've got there."

"They...should put...rampancy...as a warning on...the nanites," winced Matt.

"You know, I bet we can do something about those," said Seleni, "If you're willing to negotiate that is."

"Really? I am kinda hungry...got any mutton?" asked Matt.

"Mmm...mutton..." said both Seleni and Keenai, drooling at the thought.

Then Seleni shook her head and said, "Don't try to distract me."

"Well, you've already done it for me," said Matt, lifting his arms up to reveal that the restraints were dissolved before he spat a plasma blast in their faces and another at the wall.

"Ladies, it's been fun for a while, but I really don't want to be around you anymore," said Matt before snatching Keenai's wristcomp and jumping through the hole he made.

Seleni seemed to snap at that "No...no...NO!" she roared before throwing herself out the hole after him.

...

Meanwhile...

The guards outside the dragon pens were surprised to see the three Vikings walking into the courtyard. "Hey, heads up," muttered the first one to his friends.

"Hey there, we're here to pick up our dragons," called the lanky one with the pegleg.

"Not a chance. These dragons' days as pets is over," said the first one, leveling his staff.

"Haven't you asked for their opinion?" called the girl.

"They're not Avalar genome, they can't talk," said the second one before looking at the girl, "But a saddle...really?"

"Have you ever ridden on a dragon's back for hours?" remarked the girl.

"No, but you're won't again. Warleader Taleth made it clear what to do if we saw you," said the guard who had remained silent.

"Bet you wouldn't be so tough if our friends were here," said the muscular boy.

"Yeah...and where are they?" said the first trooper with a smirk before a lightning bolt shot out from nowhere and fried him.

"That would be them right about now," said the lanky one.

The other guards turned in time for several laser blasts to hit them, Techo and Wilson walking forward while to their surprise, something else did. The large yellow dragoness roared angrily before shooting more lightning bolts.

The Duke's guards that were there just ran for it. It was only when the dragoness started laughing with Techo and Wilson that the kids realized who it was. "Chloe, is that you?" asked Astrid.

"Who else could it be?" said the dragoness with a slightly deeper version of Chloe's voice.

"You really have been keeping stuff," said Hiccup, noticing the shocked dragons.

"That's barely scratching the surface," said Techo, "A good part of the crew don't even closely resemble humans without their disguises."

"Techo, let's leave it at that for now," said Chloe before an explosion was heard above, a shape shooting out the hole before a much larger dragoness demolished the hole in pursuit, a smaller one following.

"What was that?!" shouted Snotlout.

"Well, Matt and me aren't the only ones around who can turn into dragons," said Chloe, "Taleth's guys can too."

"Look, kids. Hop it, these guys are a whole different level of pain,"

said Techo.

The kids quickly ran over and tried to get the dragons out of their chains.

...

Matt was flying as fast as he could, hoping to draw Seleni clear. "Come on...faster, faster, faster," he muttered, panicking as another acid blast missed him, followed by a sonic burst that blew part of the battlements to dust. While there may be a small chance that Keenai would go easy on him, he was pretty sure Seleni wouldn't be holding back. "Ohshitohshitohshit!" he muttered, turning tight to avoid another blast.

He nearly tumbled out of the air to avoid Seleni's next attack, which firing an acid stream through the battlement in front of him. "Craaap," he muttered before turning to spit several plasma blasts back at them, watching as one caught Keenai, sending her spiraling into a wall with a painful 'fwack'.

"Take that, fangirl!" yelled Matt before Seleni barreled into him.

"You're DEAD!" roared Seleni before she heard two whistling noises and a couple of blue fireballs hit her side, painful but harmless. Seleni snarled and turned to glare at the two black dragons who were flying towards her, one of them carrying the lanky boy on his back.

Her eyes widened as her nanites zoomed in on the ridden dragon, a warning symbol flashing that demanded she back off. Seleni growled and disengaged from Matt, but not before leaving several acid green scratches on his wounded arm.

"Warning...you are engaging an essential...disengage," said her nanites' intelligence.

Seleni hissed, "I'm working on it," before breathing out a green mist that clung in the air. Another double shot hit her back, Seleni turning her head with a growl to see the two attackers vanishing into the clouds. Seleni was extremely tempted to dissolve the brats, but that would have earned a chewing out from Taleth about messing with timelines...

A third blast hit the back of her head at that and even though it had been Matt, something in Seleni's brain went boing. She let out a loud screech before spitting a corrosive stream around her, not carrying if it hit her enemies or the castle.

Toothless and Starflame scattered to avoid the blast of poison, some splashing onto the end of Hiccup's false leg. There was an acidic stench and Hiccup looked down to see the poison seeping through both his leg and the stirrup. "Oh, not again," he moaned.

...

Toothless looked behind to see the acid eating away before hearing Kala. _"Fly down...into some water or something." _Toothless looked around before spotting the river that lead into the sea. He tucked

his wings and made a beeline for the water.

Kala looked down to see a splash and the dragon and rider pop out the water before sighing...and then remembering Seleni just before said Shar Virk smashed into her, sending her down. She furled up her wings to avoid damaging them, but she ended up tumbling along the ground before she came to a stop.

...

Matt gulped, seeing he was alone now before another blast nearly hit him. "Hey...you're not supposed to shoot timeliners!" he yelled, before another blast nearly melted his head.

"They won't get shot if they get out of my way!" snapped Seleni before spitting more acid.

Matt glared before banking around and shooting past, raking his claws over her side as he passed. She screeched before managing to blindside Matt with a thwack from her tail. Matt yelped before, on instinct, biting down into said tail. Seleni roared before thrashing her tail from side to side to shake Matt off.

After a minute she sent Matt towards the ground and skidding along it, the smoke clearing to show he'd shifted back. "Finally..." she said happily before banking for a swoop.

...

Taleth stared at what was left of the Duke. With the Ashen gone and their insistence on a fair negotiation, he'd been able to put the annoyance out of his misery. He had to admit, he had been keeping a tight hold of temper for quite some time so he may have been a bit overzealous with the Duke.

"Sir, our ship's in orbital position to begin digging," said one of Taleth's warriors.

"Tell them they have full clearing," said Taleth, "We've wasted enough time languishing here."

"Yes, sir," said the warrior, vanishing as a teleporter beam picked him up.

...

Chris looked at his comm. "We're about 10 minutes away. Chip's finally got the hang of the ship," he said.

"It's not too hard once I've figured out the right configurations," said Chip's voice.

A burst of energy fire was heard over the com and Chris said "Erm...you ok over there?" only to hold his com away from him as Chloe yelled "DO I SOUND OK? We've been rumbled and now we're under attack...GET HERE!" before the com broke up at the same time as a series continuous explosions were heard. Chris and several bridge crew peered up to see several golden blasts lancing down from the sky to blast into the ground.

"Well, no point in hiding we're aliens now," said Chris, "Chip, get us over there and all weapons primed."

"Not a chance. I'm barely keeping us going. If they wanted to shoot us, they would have," snapped Chip.

"Then what are they shooting at? They wouldn't be wasting so many shots with the captain," said one of the crewmembers.

"I don't know...let's just hurry," said Chris.

...

Taleth could hear the blasting already when he saw two blur shoot by the window.

Taleth looked out to see Seleni chasing after Lynch. "Why am I not surprised?" he muttered, "I should have posted more guards at his cell."

He walked over to watch in time to see Matt bite Seleni's tail and be sent into the ground with force. "Wait, Seleni, break off, get away from him," he said with rising tension into his com.

"I've finally gotten that meddlesome thorn in my paw right where I want him," growled Seleni, "I will not waste this opportunity."

"No, you don't understand. Get away from him!" snapped Taleth.

"No, this time, he dies!" shouted Seleni before diving at Matt.

...

Draconus opened his eyes with a groan and looked around. "Oh...nice landing Lynch," he groaned before looking up to see Seleni bearing down on him. "But first...some fireworks," he groaned, clicking his fingers.

Seleni grimaced as she felt the temperature go up. But she couldn't have built up that much heat with the fighting. But then she felt a burning sensation within her and it was quickly spreading. Only now realizing what Taleth meant, she tried to fly higher. It was too late, her bones being highlighted against her skin before she coughed up a fireball and fell to the ground, shifting to a burnt human as Draconus got up and strolled in her direction.

"Not sure where Lynch picked up that trick, but it sure did the trick," commented Draconus.

Seleni was shaking her head as Draconus leaned in. "Are we begging? Oh please. You must have heard your victims beg many, many times," said Draconus softly.

"Mercy...please..." gasped Seleni.

"Mercy? To you? I don't have very mercy to give and I'm sure not going to waste it on you," said Draconus before holding his hand in front of her face, "Say hello to Kai for me. She might be coming back, but you won't."

Seleni closed her eyes before there was a 'frap' noise of a plasma burst shooting out, her body shaking for a second before her now-headless body slumped back.

"She wasn't too hard to kill," said Draconus before wincing in pain. He looked at his arm which was showing a few more metal patches. Also, the scratches Seleni had left him still had a green tinge and the flesh around them was starting to look diseased and black.

He winced before pulling out Keenai's wrist comp and clicking it on. "New user detected...scanning...Shar clearance confirmed...alert...rampancy detected...intervening," said a female voice in his head as a hologram appeared over his arm from the small metal strap he'd put on.

"Make it quick, will you? I really need a doctor," said Draconus.

"Complete...nanite firmware is being upgraded...ALERT...INCOMING ATTACK!" chimed the voice, Draconus turning in time for a silvery blast of energy to send him flying. Draconus landed and was sent tumbling back a considerable distance. After he stopped, he struggled to get up, his arm throbbing with pain.

"YOU...YOU FOOLISH INSULT!" roared Taleth, walking out of the smoke a shimmering field of energy around him before he blasted Draconus again.

Draconus winced before saying, "Hey, you'd have to have known she'd end up ticking off the wrong person someday."

"She was 100 times the warrior you were, you little MISTAKE!" snapped Taleth, squeezing his hands...and squeezing Matt too till something in his chest cracked. "I should have eliminated you the first time we've met. I was a fool to think you were a potential aid," snapped Taleth.

Just then, there was an angry roar before Starflame slammed into Taleth. Taleth didn't even seem phased landing on his feet before raising his hand and causing Starflame to freeze in place. "Go away, mongr...you," muttered Taleth, staring at Starflame before saying "Goodbye." blasting Starflame backwards.

"Right then, where were we?" said Taleth turning around. Draconus hadn't been able to get far, not with the injuries he had. "Is Mr. Lynch home? I have a hunch he's missing a crewmember," Taleth said cruelly.

"He's licking his wounds right now, can I take a message?" said Draconus sarcastically.

Taleth laughed and sent a blast into Draconus's head, causing him to scream before Matt took over again. "Now then...where were we?"

"You were gonna frag me for blow Seleni's head off...but then decided you'll give me a bucket of ice cream instead," said Matt.

"No, but we did find an escape pod when we came into orbit," said Taleth, Starflame suddenly flying at him. Taleth held out a hand and

froze the dragoness in midair. "I'll deal with you after I've finished with him," he said before sending her flying almost as fast as she could on her own.

"Now then, we managed to find a crash site, off some little island. I'm afraid though that she tried to resist," said Taleth smoothly, letting it sink in to Matt.

"You're lying!" snapped Matt, "The marauders have her, they told me!"

Taleth laughed and said, "And you believed that collective group of bandits? You're even more slow-witted than I thought. Well...they have most of her." said Taleth, smiling coldly

Matt's eyes blazed as he yelled, "I'll tell you apart just for saying that lie!"

Taleth made a wave and Matt was shot back...through a several foot thick wall. Taleth said coldly, "A claw for a claw as they say on Avalar." before he looked at the starter gem. "Control, beam me to the Skidbladnir...and fire a volley into this position...full spread."

"Sir, is that not a little on the overkill side?" came the reply.

"Where Lynch is involved, there is such thing as overkill," said Taleth.

"Aye sir, we monitored his ship approaching your position, should we destroy it?" said the reply.

Taleth shook his head. "No...let them mourn," he said before he vanished.

Matt tried to get up, but his body was screaming with too much pain to move.

...

Kala managed to right herself in time to avoid bowling the other dragons aside. _"We've got to get back! He's going to kill him!"_ she wailed.

"What, again?" asked Hookfang in a dazed tone. It seems a piece of blasted-off battlement had hit him on the head at one point.

"YES, YOU TALKING HANDBAG!" roared Kala, turning to see Chloe, Techo and Wilson running up. _"I thought he was dead,"_ she said, looking at Wilson, confused.

"Who was?" asked Toothless.

"Never mind that now," said Kala before taking off.

She was about to get height again when a dozen golden orbs shot down from the heavens, blowing sections of the castle apart. The shockwaves from the attack ended up sending her tumbling through the air to the forest beyond the castle.

Kala roared in horror and took off again straight away.

...

"Come on, come on!" she muttered, surveying the burning rubble below. If it weren't for draconic senses, she probably would have never been able to pick up Matt's scent amidst all the smoke. But it was strong enough for her to focus on until she heard Matt's faint moans.

She landed and looked down to see Matt was out cold.

"No...please...no...nonononono!" she began as her own nanites displayed...nothing.

...

Toothless was looking down as he heard an agonized roar that turned into a human scream briefly. He could also feel a blaze of heat as the fires leapt up even higher for a few seconds.

After a minute he spotted Kala sobbing helplessly over a shape and he nudged Hiccup to point it out

"Could that be...we better get down there," said Hiccup.

...

The duo landed to see Kala/Starflame curled around a bloodied shape laying in the rubble, growling as she spotted them. "Easy there, Starflame," said Hiccup, "We're here to help." Starflame growled, getting up to see that Matt had been messed up badly, his left arm underneath a slab of granite. "We need to get him out of here," said Hiccup, "He needs all the help he can get."

"You're going nowhere you...Viking," said a voice.

Hiccup turned to see several of the duke's men. "What? How did you guys survive?" he asked.

"Luck...you and your little dragon friends caused this," snapped the injured guardsman, holding a sword and his men aiming crossbows.

"Hey, it wasn't our fault. It was the other guys who were also dragons and... Look, don't you think standing in a burning ruin is a bad idea?" said Hiccup.

"I don't care anymore. You and that damn baron killed the Duke. ARCHERS, TAKE AIM!" snapped the captain before there was a deafening 'brakka brakka brakka' and the guardsmen seemed to dance before falling down.

Hiccup stared as he saw several men walk through the flames in heavy futuristic armor. A few of them looked to see Matt before they turned their featureless faces on the others, one saying, "Get away from the captain."

"Hey, I was just trying to help," said Hiccup.

"Stand down," said Chloe's voice, her landing in human form.

"Ma'am, they're..."

"On our side, remember?" said Chloe, "Not to mention they're VIPs. Now why are you not trying to unbury my brother?"

"Yes' ma'am," said the trooper, running up to try and pull the rubble off Matt as Chloe turned to look at the kids.

"Surprise," she said a little sarcastically.

"So, have you always been able to change into a, you know..." started Astrid.

"A year or two now," said Chloe, watching as several troopers were trying to unpin Matt.

"Your brother too?" asked Hiccup.

"Actually, he was doing it before me, it's a long story," said Chloe.

A swearword was heard before someone yelled "Get Lao, this is bad."

Hiccup winced at that and said, "You don't think he'll..." He partially moved his pegleg, which was more than a little corroded from Seleni's acid.

Chloe noticed that. "Hey, you gonna be able to fly home with that as it is?" she asked.

"I'm not sure I can," said Hiccup as he tried to maneuver Toothless's tail flap, but he couldn't make it move very much. "I'm afraid he can only glide without his tailfins working properly, and not very far at that," said Hiccup.

"Crap, how are we gonna get you back? We can't use our ship," said Chloe.

"Your little longboat, I don't think so," said Snotlout before a whirring sound was heard above them. They looked to see something large slowly descending through the smoke.

"Nah...THAT'S our ride," said Chloe, pointing up.

The kids and dragons' jaws dropped as they saw it was some sort of armored metal ship floating above them. "Uh, why can't we use that?" asked Snotlout.

"Because you might accidentally atomize Poland," said Chloe simply.

"You can do that?" asked Astrid.

"We'd rather not to," said Chloe, "We'll meet up with our boat, sail you back."

"That might take too long," said Hiccup, "Matt needs a healer

now."

"We got doctors," said Chloe as their ship landed.

"What's a doctor?" asked Astrid.

"More advanced and slightly-better paid than a healer," said Chloe.

...

Stoick listened grimly as Chloe told a 'modified' version of the events that has transpired. "So, after you've finished destroying their base and driving off the last of them, you all came back without problems?" asked Stoick.

"Well...for the most part. Matt was pretty hurt, but all that happened to the kids is that your son needs to put on a new leg which isn't too hard."

"Nope, I've already got several spares made just in case," said Gobber, "I could probably make something to replace Matt's arm if ya like."

"No...we've...his arm should be ok," said Chloe a little hesitantly.

"In my expert opinion, no man's arm can recover from the shredding you said it got," said Gobber.

"Trust us, you won't be able to tell the difference," said Chloe, turning to leave.

"Before you go, did you take care of those marauders?" asked Stoick.

Chloe paused and said, "Unfortunately, they already split from their leaders before we got there. But we'll deal with them if they turn up again." She then headed out.

...

Meanwhile, Kala was feeling extremely depressed. Thanks to Taleth, Matt will now think she's dead and he'll never think to look for her right in front of him. Of course, that's even if he survives the brutalizing that that he had received. As a result she was freaking out a bit.

"__THIS ISN'T FAIR...NOT...FAIR!"_ she snapped, bashing her head against a wall with each word "_Why me? What colossal sin against the universe could I have committed that earned me this bad karma?!"_ yelled Kala.

"__Calm down, you're gonna hurt...wow,"_ said Hookfang before noticing that Kala had actually bashed a small hole in the wall without injury.

"__Calm down?! You don't have any idea what it's like to be trapped in the wrong body!"_ snapped Kala.

"Not exactly,"_ said Hookfang carefully, the dragons peering between the hole and the apparently intact Kala.

"Kala, I'm sure Matt is bound to recognize who you really are at some point,"_ said Toothless.

"He's a complete idiot who reads maps upside down,"_ said Kala dully.

"Are you sure you're not confusing him with that one?"_ asked Stormfly, pointing at Morph who was staring at a portable DVD player that wasn't plugged in.

"When does the movie start again?" he asked.

"Matt's is more accidental stupidity. Morph's is just persistent,"_ said Kala before doubletaking, "_WHO LET HIM LOOSE?"_

"Where'd he get that thing he's looking at for that matter?"_ asked Stormfly.

"You don't want to...oh no...I smell that old guy again, the one who smells like cabbage,"_ said Kala.

"Oh, not him again,"_ moaned Hookfang.

"And we probably don't want him to see him,"_ said Toothless, pointing at Morph who was tapping the screen.

"C'mon, I'm far away enough that I'm not disturbing anyone. Why can't I watch the movie?" he complained.

"_How did he understand us?"_ said Stormfly.

Kala sighed and said, "_He's got the universal tongue. Don't ask him to show it. Sorry Morph,"_ before wincing and swallowing Morph in one gulp...just in time.

Mildew walked by at that. "Dirty dragons," he muttered before pausing and looking at the female Night Fury. She didn't seem to be quite well. Her scales had a faint green tinge and her cheeks kept bulging. "Weird." he muttered, walking off and tripping over a box on the ground.

Kala looked down at the box that Mildew had tripped over and saw it was the DVD case. The lettering may have been Chinese, but the picture of Hiccup riding Toothless on the cover made her feel a bit uneasy. As it was she yelled "_BLAST IT!"_

The dragons looked confused so Kala decided to get herself. However, as she was about to launch a fireball, something set it off inside of her and it caused her to briefly inflate and spit out smoke instead.

Mildew looked confused before walking out. It was just in time as Kala was unable to hold on anymore and spat Morph out, smashing the box. "Aw man, now I can't watch my movie," moaned Morph, "And I wasn't near any of the crew too."

"No watching movies that can break time and space!"_ snapped

Kala.

Morph stared at Kala before saying, "I think you're mad at me for some reason."

"It's me, tell Matt of I will find a way to make you SUFFER!" snapped Kala.

Morph stared blankly before saying, "You're a cute dragon."

"Just tell him or I'll tell him exactly WHO took a bite out of his Judge Dredd comic," growled Kala.

Morph shrugged before knocking on the door and calling, "Matt, are you up yet?"

Kala facepawed and said, _"He's not in there, he's back at the ship. Did you leave your brain on cruise again?"_

Morph's eyes slowly crossed, the dragons leaning in before he suddenly said calmly, "I like pie."

Kala turned to the others and said dully, _"Behold, the proof both for and against intelligent life on other planets."_ Morph nodded, just as Chloe came in, Kala hissing, _"Tell her instead."_

Morph blinked before saying, "Starflame says her name is Starflame."

Kala stared in horror before faceplanting with a groan, _"I hate you, Morph."_

"Yes, that's nice..." said Chloe before realizing something was amiss. "What are you doing out of uniform?!" she snapped.

"The holocloak was getting hot so I took it off," said Morph.

"Get it BACK ON!" screamed Chloe.

"But I'm still too hot," complained Morph before Kala decided to shorten the conversation (if it could be called that) by blasting Morph point-blank and rendering him a nearly unrecognizable charred mass that could easily be mistaken for a giant burnt marshmallow. "I smell like smores," said Morph, happily.

Chloe sighed and said, "Don't change a muscle until we get back in the ship and put you under ice."

"Ok," said Morph happily, looking at Kala after Chloe had left and saying, "I told her, was that ok?" before he was blasted into the bay.

Kala sighed and said, _"Ok, that's taken some of the tension off, but now I have a headache...and heartburn."_

"Erm...fish?" asked Hookfang nervously.

...

Matt did not feel good. He was going to live, but there was quite a

bit of damage that will keep him bedridden for at least three days. Not to mention there was little of his left arm left to salvage. He looked over with a groan and reached up to scratch an itch...only to feel cold metal on his chin.

"Yeah...it sucks I know," said Techo's voice.

Matt looked up at Techo and said, "Techo, I'm not sure I've ever asked, but how did it happen to you?"

"Accident during basic training, wouldn't you believe," said Techo, sounding amused.

"To you? I find that pretty hard to swallow," said Matt.

"I was a rookie. Not everyone gets super awesome dragon powers first week on the job," said Techo with a chuckle.

"Super awesome dragon powers didn't save me from this," said Matt, moving his arm.

"Course not, military and mercs have dangerous lives. It happens to almost anyone," said Techo gloomily.

"Yeah, it's just that I've been able to avoid it so long, I was thinking it wouldn't happen to me," said Matt.

Techo shrugged. "Hey, nobody gives a toss. Alot of the guys here'll be jealous...buuut that's not what's got you down, is it?" he said.

Matt sighed and said, "No, Taleth had more to say than how he was going to finish me. He said he found Kala before the marauders did...and finished her."

"And you believed the jumped-up smeghead?" said Techo, surprised

"I don't want to, but there isn't much proof that Kala's alive," said Matt.

"Bullpocky!" snapped a voice and the two turned to NegaMorph walking in.

"Not in the mood, NegaMorph. Explain," said Matt, coldly.

"Remember when Kala had that near-literal meltdown before we got here?" asked NegaMorph.

"The one where she roasted that boarding team?" said Matt

"Yep, at the same time, I got a massive case of heartburn for no apparent reason," said NegaMorph, "And I'm not the type to believe in mere coincidences."

"So...where is she?" said Matt, his eyes narrowing.

"No idea," said NegaMorph, "All I know is that she's definitely alive, but not sure if she's well. Because I got the same surge of fiery agony after Taleth had nearly blasted you to kingdom come."

"Then you're in charge of finding her...FIND HER!" snapped Matt.

"I'll try my best. But wherever those marauders have stashed her, it's very well-hidden," said NegaMorph.

"Then you have your work cut out, don't you?" said Matt, laying back to stare at the ceiling.

"Yes I do," said NegaMorph, "Try to recover quickly. If anyone's supposed to rescue her, it's you."

"I plan to," said Matt, in a dark tone.

* * *

><p>Here's another chapter. I would have posted it last week, but I had some trouble with a faulty modem. Still, I think it built up plenty of tension for this chapter. And this chapter is definitely a turning point in the story. Not only do the kids know the gang's secret now, but there's the death of an old enemy, the return of an old friend, and the permanent injury that Matt suffers. And it has not been easy for anyone, let alone Kala. In case you were wondering, the woman that Hiccup and Toothless heard screaming was Kala, her grief causing her to briefly return back to her normal form.<p>

Things are definitely going to be different now. We'll be seeing more of the gang without their facade and we'll be doing some more traveling since the North Star is able to fly again, though it's not spaceworthy. Keep an eye out for next week's chapter where we'll dip into another region's mythology and please review.

7. The Isles of the Enchantress

****Voyagers Saga****

****Broken Nest****

****Chapter 7: The Isles of the Enchantress****

One of the plusses of no longer needing to keep up appearances meant that Chloe could finally stretch her wings a little and was doing so, tagging along on the Dragon Academy's flying lesson...and not as a rider. It was actually nice to have an open conversation without keeping secrets. Although the constant questions was starting to get a little annoying.

"Look, we weren't always like this...and it wasn't magic that did it," she snapped, answering the same 'was it magic/a curse?' question for the 5th time, "It was a run in with technology, weird technology."

"But what kind of technology could have done it?" asked Hiccup.

"Really advanced technology that you can't possibly understand," snapped Chloe. Chloe stopped at that, peering over at Hiccup who

looked like he was sweating. "You feeling ok? You look grim," she asked.

"It's just the heat, I'll be fine," said Hiccup.

"It's 5 below up here. It's anything but hot," said Chloe

"Maybe...I should rest...just a bit..." said Hiccup before slumping over, his leg becoming disengaged from the stirrup.

Chloe yelped at that, barrelrolling to grab Toothless and hold him upright. "Ok, lesson's over," she said urgently, peering around to see an out of the way clearing. She spotted a bare if snowy mountain top and started gliding down towards it. The others landed not long after she did, Chloe shifting back to human and helping Hiccup down. "Bloody hell, he's burning up. One of you go get some help," she said.

"I'll get help," said Astrid, making Stormfly take off. Chloe tried to keep Hiccup's temperature down by putting some snow on his forehead.

'Scanning...unidentified pathogen detected,' chimed her nanites calmly, Chloe peering down to see several green lines running up from the false leg.

"Oh man," she muttered, hearing flapping coming. She turned to the others and said, "I need some fresh clean water."

"Uh, where from?" asked Tuffnut.

"From here would be acceptable," said Chloe. The twins gave her a blank look. Chloe sighed and said, "Snow is clean water, assuming someone hasn't already walked through it. Just melt a patch."

Toothless immediately spat a blast of flame into the snow, Chloe pulling a bottle from under her clothing and shoving it into the stream of melted snow before saying "Hiccup, you need to drink some of this."

"Tha thath thith thooth," muttered Hiccup. Chloe thought he was mostly babbling until she noticed Hiccup's tongue had swollen a lot.

"This is bad..." muttered Chloe, taking a quick scan and saying into her comm, "Lao, I'm sending you a scan. Get a disguise and get to Berk yesterday," she said.

"Oh, I know what to do about his tongue," said Snotlout, "Just put it in Toothless's spit."

Chloe stared for a second before saying "That's nuts."

"Actually, Hiccup has noted that Night Fury saliva has some healing properties, particularly with swellings," said Fishlegs.

"Fine...urgh...Toothless, you do it," Chloe said, gulping weakly.

"Here, you'll need this bowl," said Fishlegs, tossing Chloe a bowl.

She caught and asked, "Do you always carry one around?"

"Sometimes, if it's before lunchtime," said Fishlegs.

Chloe winced as Toothless quite literally gobbled into the bowl before she said weakly "Hiccup...time to wince and spit...don't worry if you taste fish..."

Toothless just burbled unintelligibly, evidentially not fully conscious...which was probably for the best. After a minute, Hiccup weakly spat out the dragon spit. "Urgh...fish..." he managed faintly.

Chloe grimaced and said, "Try not to think about it too much. Just try to sleep, but if you see a long dark tunnel, stay away from the light." Hiccup nodded weakly before Chloe snapped "How long does it take to get help?"

"She ought to back in another five minutes," said Fishlegs.

"I hope so, we need to get him somewhere warm. Hold on," said Chloe angrily, before seeing a tree and sending a lightning bolt into it, setting it on fire.

"Didn't you want him cold?" asked Snotlout.

"Not that cold," snapped Chloe.

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As it was, the worsening weather meant it was 15 minutes before Astrid returned with help to find the gang clustered around the smoldering tree. "Lightning bolt out of nowhere, who would have thought it?" said Chloe innocently.

"I don't care what the dragons do here, where's my son?" demanded Stoick.

"He just passed out according to Snotlout. I was just...erm...hunting when I saw Toothless glide in," Chloe said innocently.

Fortunately, Stoick was too concerned about his son to care about Chloe's flimsy story. He looked at his sweating and shivering face and asked, "What kind of fever is this?"

"Never seen it before. Luckily our clan's doctor is coming with the next boat. My brother's up and he is going to see that my brother stays upright," said Chloe.

"Doctor?" asked Stoick.

"It's a fancy word for 'healer'," said Chloe, "Doctor Lao was brought into the clan by us during our travels. If anyone can get your son upright, he can."

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Meanwhile, Matt was keeping an eye on the water as they approached the docks. He wasn't in the mood for Steampipe right now, especially since he had to keep his mostly metal arm under a large glove.

"Stay calm, boss. These cybernetics are waterproof," said Techo, patting him on the back.

"What kind of cold coulda spooked Chloe so much as to call in Lao?" said Matt

"Doesn't sound like the garden variety," said Techo.

Chloe was already on the dock waiting as the ship pulled up, Matt and the others walking down the plank. "Ok, where is he?" said Lao, in a grouchy mood due to the ancient Chinese outfit he was being forced to wear.

"I'm pretty sure he's in the house with the dragons near it," said Techo.

"Well I have a limited field of vision because the smegging bamboo dustbin lid on my head," snapped Lao.

"Could be worse." said Chloe.

"How so?" said Lao darkly, casing Chloe to clam up as they approached Hiccup's house, Stoick standing grimly outside.

"Well, at least you only have to deal with only one protective parent," muttered Matt.

Lao remembered the greeting bow to Stoick just in time before saying "In there?"

"Aye," said Stoick, "And you better have something to help him."

"I will do my best, but we will need to be alone. My ways are a secret as you clearly understand," said Lao, looking over at where several dragons were watching.

Stoick's eyes narrowed and said, "If my son suffers worse..."

"I wouldn't have brought him here if I knew he couldn't help," said Matt.

Stoick glared before letting the trio in. As soon as the door was closed, Lao pulled his coat off to reveal several pieces of medical equipment, both from the North Star and the ice base's preserved med-bay before heading up the stairs to where Hiccup was in bed, Toothless curled up watching. "Ok, Mister Haddock. I am Dr. Lao...from the captain's force. Can you hear me?" he said to Hiccup while putting a medical scanner together.

Hiccup made some kind of noise, but it didn't sound very intelligible. "He's probably more than a little delirious right now," said Chloe.

"Hmm...do we know if he came into contact with splitters at any point?" asked Lao, taking a few scans and reading the readout.

"Come to think of it, I think one of the marauders had him by the throat and Talia had to shoot him," said Matt.

"Smeg, splitter blood's toxic. You think they evolved the ability to combust?" snapped Lao.

"I thought they're disintegrating looked a bit too...video game-esque," said Chloe.

"Yes, the Splitter Empire added it after a drop of blood in a colony water supply wiped out 76% of their slave workforce, one good thing the empire did," said Lao before saying "We need to get him to headquarters. I cannot do anything with this equipment except slow the effects down."

"Good luck trying to convince his dad that," said Matt.

"Actually, as captain, that's your job," said Lao.

"Smeg," muttered Matt.

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"Out of the question," said Stoick sternly.

"The doctor couldn't bring everything with him. Most of his medicine is very perishable," said Matt, desperately.

"I'm not leaving my son's life in a complete stranger's hands," snapped Stoick.

"He has blood fever: an illness rare but not unheard of in your lands," said Lao in a 'talking to difficult patients' voice as he walked out, "With what I have, I can slow it down. But if the ingredients used in the remedy mean it would be useless by the time we transported it here. He has to come with us...or he will be dead in a week."

Stoick hesitated and Matt said, "I wouldn't be putting your son's life on the line if I wasn't certain we'd have a cure for him. I give you my word that your son will return good as new. Well, we can't give him a new leg, but he will be cured." Stoick glared before nodding, Matt able to get a good idea that there still wasn't much trust. "How about someone comes then? To make sure nothing happens?" he suggested

"I suppose I can agree to that," said Stoick, "His friends are as tight-knit a group as you can find. But I warn you, if any of them don't return, you better not return either."

"If they don't return, none of us did," said Matt before nodding to Lao.

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While it would have been much faster to have just flown the dragons, Stoick insisted that Hiccup be transported by boat as there was less likely a chance he would slip off and fall into the sea.

Astrid wandered over to Matt. "Stoick's going to notice your...stuff," she warned quietly.

Matt grinned and said, "We've got a cover in place." as the fog cleared to reveal a cliff with a wooden pulley lift going up and a couple of Matt's men in Viking disguises on guard

Stoick lifted an eyebrow and asked, "What's this?"

"Little something my mec...blacksmith came up with to get up the cliff easy. Safe as riding a dragon," said Matt, cheerfully, hopping off the boat as it came up to the coast and yelling something in Britannia to the guards.

Stoick turned to the kids and said, "I'm sure I don't need to tell you this, but look after Hiccup. I don't want anything bad to happen to him."

"Don't worry. He'll be fine," said Astrid, nodding to where Toothless was glaring at the guards as they helped Hiccup, who was walking again thanks to Lao's stopgap 'remedies' off the boat.

"Yep, if anything did happen to Hiccup, you wouldn't even get the chance to hack up Lynch," said Snotlout, "Toothless will beat you to it."

Matt came back up at that. "Ok, we're all set here," he said calmly, nodding over to where the lift was slowly going up...slowly as Toothless had gotten on too despite complaints

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A little later, the rest of the dragon riders were on top of the cliff and was looking around the series of tents Matt's crew had set up. "You know, I kinda expected more. What with you guys being from another world and all," said Snotlout.

"Shh..." said Matt, watching as Stoick's ship sailed into the fog before finally saying "Ok, boys. Show's over."

Lao immediately pulled the hat off and snapped, "Open the cargo lift and let's get Mr. Haddock to the medibay." On cue a section of the ice split down the middle and whirled away, causing the dragons and kids to back off as a much larger metal lift came up from it.

"But...how..." stuttered Astrid.

"Well, we can't let just anyone know we're aliens, can we?" said Matt.

"Ok, let's get him down," called Lao, two troopers helping Hiccup over to the lift.

"He'll be fine," said Matt.

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"He's not fine," said Lao to Matt and Chloe, "It's definitely splitter DNA contamination. Luckily the HLF forces here kept more

accurate records. The NSC's never had a case. I only guessed what it was because of my interest in medical history."

"And by the sound of it, you don't have a ready-made cure on hand," said Chloe.

"No, we have most of the ingredients at the base in storage, but there is indeed a perishable element. A rare plant extract. All the supplies here are useless," said Lao.

"What kind of plant?" asked Matt.

"A tropical one, probably from the Mediterranean area. High magi index so that limits the best places. It'll be hard to find," said Lao gloomily.

"How much time does Hiccup have?" asked Matt.

"He's in stage two. According to history records, if he reaches stage 3, he'll need genetic therapy. He'll reach stage 3 in 48 hours by my estimate," said Lao sadly.

"Then we better get searching," said Matt, "I've been wanting to travel south anyways. It's kinda nippy up here."

"Chip already got a vague hit," said Lao, nodding.

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"What?" snapped Astrid, Matt standing his ground despite the axe Astrid was now holding.

"I said we need the flower from somewhere in the Med. You could get a tan," he said, his smartarse' side kicking in due to misguided self-defense.

"How are we supposed to get that far down south? It took take weeks?" snapped Astrid.

"We have a flying starship," Matt reminded.

"Is it fast enough?" asked Astrid warily.

"You doubt my pride and joy? We could go round the world in minutes from orbit," said Matt, sounding insulted.

"But, wouldn't Stoick notice if we all disappeared at once?" asked Astrid, "I mean, he's gonna be wondering where Hiccup is."

"I actually have a solution to that," said Contrinus, walking forward while dragging a pet carrier behind, "Something I've been working on in my spare time."

"Ah, I forgot to mention. Our 'mascots' are as intelligent as we are...and can talk...except Morph. You'll meet him later. He's dumb but can also talk," said Matt as Astrid jumped back.

Contrinus opened up the pet carrier and reached inside, "It's a simple idea, really. Just working with the local- OUCH!" she yelped before pulling herself out, a Terrible Terror latched onto her wing

with its mouth. However, Matt could see the Terrible Terror was wearing a small harness with a tube attached.

"What the hell is that?" Matt said, peering.

"It's just the carrying compartment," said Contrinus as she tried to get her wing free, "For holding letters and messages."

"You made a carrier pigeon?" asked Matt before the Terror began attacking him at the insult.

"Carrier dragon," said Contrinus, "They're very specific about the title."

"NOT THE FAAACE!" screamed Matt before the dragon jumped off him

"Well, I'm certain these little guys are more than smart enough to find their way home when we give them a letter to deliver, right?" asked Contrinus, patting the dragon on the head.

"Seems like a plan," said Matt, massaging his nose.

"That's not a bad idea," said Astrid, "You have trained these guys, right?"

"Well, I'm pretty I at least have their homing instinct homed," said Contrinus.

"I can see so many ways this could backfire," muttered Matt.

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Sometime later, the North Star 2 was flying towards the more temperate half of Europe at full speed. However, there was a few problems along the way, mainly the way the kids were adapting to the intense speed.

"Easy...just stop looking out the damn porthole," said NegaMorph, still wearing his holocloak by order of Matt. The girls didn't need any more shocks.

"I think I've seen as much as I need to," said Fishlegs, who was a rather pale shade of green.

"Easy...hold on," said NegaMorph, before pulling a bucket out of his storage pocket dimension and passing it over.

"All hands. We are 20 minutes from target LZ. Squads report to briefing room," said an automated announcement.

"Speedy, isn't she?" said NegaMorph with a grin before looking over at the dragons occupying the cargo hold, including Matt's dragon who had literally fought her way aboard before takeoff. While the dragons were probably better at coping at the high speeds than the kids, they probably wouldn't welcome the smell of rotten fish right now. Besides, they seemed to be keeping their minds off of it by talking about whatever it is dragons talk about.

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"Oh please. You all fly and you're getting Mach sickness?" Kala said, laughing her head off.

"I've never gone this fast before," moaned Stormfly.

"I have," said Kala happily before the lights above them flickered. The dragons looked up at the flickering lights, which fascinated them enough to take their minds off the high-speed flight. For Toothless, Stormfly, and Hookfang, that was a welcome relief. For Kala, not so much. "Urgh...I have...karma...where's NegaMorph and his bucket?" Kala groaned.

NegaMorph walked over and asked, "Hey, Starflame, you hungry, girl?" Kala glared before grabbing Nega and shaking him till his fedora fell out of the cloak and she threw up into it...dissolving it

NegaMorph glared before materializing another fedora. "You're so lucky I can make more of those," he said crossly. Kala just glared and spat a plasma burst into Nega's mouth. NegaMorph staggered a bit as he regenerated. "Oh, right in the pie hole. Now nothing's going to taste right all day," he snapped.

At that point the lights went out...

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"Chip? What the hell's going on?" snapped Matt as the ship went into a nosedive.

"Er, we're having some technical difficulties," said Chip, though his voice was coming through with lots of static.

"HURRY UP!" snapped Matt before every screen suddenly displayed the NSC national symbol and a familiar voice said "All systems restored to peak efficiency...assuming autopilot...good morning sir."

Matt paused in shock. "WARDEN? I thought you were...deleted," he said astonished.

"No, though you could have downloaded me, you annoying person. You're in download range of the command section, sir. Approaching at Mach 2. I presume there is a reason as it clearly wasn't for me," said WARDEN a little bitterly.

"Uh, we've been a bit preoccupied with the salvaging operation to find all of the missing pieces," said Matt.

"I'm not even going to grace that with an answer...why is there several timeline specifics on board?" said WARDEN, icily.

"Well, that's a long story, but the main reason is because one of them has had contact with splitter blood, not Xander's by the way, and we need to get something to treat him before he hits stage 3," said Matt.

"Blood fever? That's eradicated," said Warden before a whirring camera indicated he was looking closely, "We need blackfire roots...scanning...too much magi. I have pinpointed it to an

archipelago on the area."

"Good, which country is it closest to, out of curiosity?" asked Matt.

"A small cluster of islands that, according to temporal scans, is due to be destroyed in 72 hours," said WARDEN.

"Then we better get some roots before that," said Matt.

"I suggest sending teams to each of the islands. If we use a team by team search then we will miss the deadline by days," said WARDEN.

"Good, let's do that," said Matt, "And do we have any information about the islands? I'd rather not send my team to this era's version of Krakatoa."

"Negative...no records exist," said WARDEN.

"A little unsettling, but we're going in anyways," said Matt.

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The kids looked out at the beach where the North Star 2's final landing had taken place. "Jungles; big, green and full of giant spiders," said Matt as way of introduction.

Chloe punched Matt in the arm and said, "Don't make that kind of joke."

"But it has got giant spiders," moaned Matt, pointing.

Chloe looked to see Matt was pointing at a tarantula that was crawling up a tree. Chloe froze before the tarantula fell down and landed on her face...

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The scream was pretty impressive. It was certainly loudly enough to be heard across the island.

Matt and Astrid peered up before Matt said weakly "Chloe doesn't like spiders." pointing to where an electrocuted tarantula was weaving across the sand, a faint 'bleh' heard.

"I'm surprised she didn't completely roast it," said Astrid.

"She sometimes does that too," said Matt weakly.

"So I should probably try to talk the twins out of trying a fake spider's prank on her," said Astrid.

"Yeah..." said Matt weakly.

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Stormfly peered cautiously around the jungle. _"It's just a jungle,"_ said Kala, sniffing around.

"There could be dangerous predators," said Stormfly.

"So? We're dragons. What could possibly prey on us?" asked Kala.

"Bigger dragons," said Stormfly promptly.

Kala paused and said, _"Well, there's that. But I'm pretty sure we would have noticed in a bigger dragon lives here."_

"Changewings," said Stormfly, peering around distrustfully, as Matt's men walked through the knee high grass.

Kala sniffed the air and said, _"Wouldn't we have smelled them?"_

"I can't even tell what the normal smells are around here," said Hookfang, peering around.

"It could just be a simple island. Just one with a vastly different forest than you ever been in," said Kala.

"Urgh...give me Berk any day," said Hookfang bitterly.

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"All teams. Report in. We're on a damn deadline here," said Matt into his comm.

"Team one here...sweep of our island 95% complete...nothing even close to the root...just a volcano and the wreckage from the Bladestorm. We can switch to tech recovery on your go ahead sir."

"Team two here. We got jack shit...but there is alot of shipwrecks and abandoned vessels here...and now just local. We found an old splitter empire cutter...no sign of the crew."

"Team three here...we got signs of camps here...long deserted. No sign of the root."

"Team four. We're following a possible hit...also found remains of ruins...and we've found signs of weapon fire. It's definitely not recent."

"Teams one through three can start collecting anything of use, especially from the Bladestorm," said Matt, "But all of these wrecks didn't just happen to show up here out of coincidence. Nor do I believe the crew just disappeared for no reason. Start looking for anything that could have made them go poof and try not to go poof yourselves." He focused on team four and asked, "What kind of ruins did you find? Ancient ruins or just plain ancient ruins?"

"Part of the ruins matches that of Asgardian tech from verse M-24/b. Weapons damage looks like a mix of Dark One and Atlantean," said the voice of Team four's leader, "Looks like a perimeter. I can see recent traffic in the area and there are signs of life further inside the complex."

"Sentient life?" asked Matt, "Because I'd rather not walk right into a viper's pit."

"Definitely, sir. We found a patch where the roots been harvested sir. Emissions go straight to the inhabited zone."

"I would advise caution, but I should also mention that our patient is within an hour of reaching stage 3," said WARDEN.

That was the tiebreaker for Matt. "I don't care if we arrived on Merlin's private island getaway!" he snapped, "We're getting that root in time if we have to kick through 20 feet of thief's butt!"

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The strange creature, looking like a fusion of panther and human, peered at the humans below before jumping down and silently running through the ruins towards his mistress's palace. "My lady. The newcomers head this way. They have void technology," he said after he had scrambled in, bowing.

"At long last," said a woman's voice, "I was starting to think this day will never come."

"Shall I assemble the warriors and hunt them down?" asked the panther man.

"No, flies are easier to catch with honey than vinegar," said the woman's voice, "Prepare the hall. Our guests deserve a proper welcome."

The panther man breathed a sigh of relief. The last time they had attempted to fight void walkers, they had almost been eradicated.

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"Squad 1, move up," said Matt, waving the teams forward, then all clustered around the cover of a 'MAKO' assault carrier. The carrier itself was holding Hiccup, the unanimous agreement being that it was faster to mix the final ingredient onsite.

"Matt, as urgently as we need that root, don't you think the MAKO's overkill?" asked Chloe.

"No, 'overkill' would be having all the dragons here plus us as dragons," said Matt, "I think I'm toning it down for once." On cue, Chloe pointed back to where Toothless's head peered out from a ruin, glaring straight ahead.

"Oh great," muttered Matt before the MAKO pilot said "Target on thermal...coming out of the main building...human but I'm getting heavy magi signals from it."

"I was kidding about Merlin, but I doubt we'll get anyone so friendly," muttered Matt before reaching for his ion blade.

"Greetings, walkers of the void. What brings you to my abode?" called

a female voice.

"Blackfire roots and we don't have time to haggle," called Matt.

"Blackfire roots?" said the figure, walking into the spotlights of the MAKO, revealing a Greek woman wearing what would be alluring clothing for the time period.

"Uh, yeah," said Matt, a little put off, "We've got a friend who's really sick and he needs them. And since all the roots here have been picked, I assume you're the one who did it."

"Of course, it's dangerous," said the woman.

"Well, dangerous to people who don't know how to use it properly, but we really, really need it," said Matt.

"Hmm...let me see your friend. Maybe I can cure him? I know many...remedies," said the woman.

"Not so fast, what's your name?" asked Chloe.

The woman smiled and said, "It's Circe."

Matt couldn't help but feel a little uncomfortable as it made him recall his 'acquaintance' who indirectly caused Chris's lycanthropy, but they probably only share a name, right? "Ok, this way," said Matt coldly before Chris said "Hey...more guys." pointing to where several figures in cloaks were holding bows.

"My guards," explained Circe, "Sometimes unwelcome visitors arrive and they have to deal with them quickly."

"Well...keep whatever they are in line and there will be no trouble," said Matt, banging the hatch, making it open to show two armed combat medics and Hiccup, out cold. Lao was also there.

Circe took one look at him and said, "Poison, most definitely, probably was introduced to something not from this world, wasn't he?"

"We call it blood fever. I'm guessing we're not the only 'out of towners'. You seem fine with the tech," said Matt before Lao said gloomily "She has the root? Doesn't matter anymore."

"What? I thought you said we had time," said Matt.

"It's grown immune to the suppressants," said Lao, Matt noticing that Circe seemed briefly...happy?

"Hmm...I may have something that can help," Circle said.

Lao gave her a dubious look and said, "If you have a healing spring that can remove his illness, I'd have to see that for myself."

"It's not a spring. I have collected many...artifacts over my years here. I know of one that will help. Bring him," said Circe, the troopers looking to Matt who shrugged. "Go with it," he said.

Lao leaned closed to Matt and muttered, "I don't trust her. Something about her doesn't belong here."

"I know. Nobody put their guard down," replied Matt as the medics helped Hiccup up, the boy's skin covered in black splodges...genetic breakdown.

As the group walked in, Matt observed the almost-unrealistically perfect Greek architecture inside, with broad columns and various frescos. "As I said, welcome...to my island," said Circe before the ground shook for a second, a rumble in the distance. Circe paused and said, "Curious, the volcano shouldn't be close to erupting for 10 more years."

"That might be us. Our ship was attacked by an orbital defense machine," said Chris.

Circe stopped at that. That little piece of cooperation between the Allfather and the Atlantean void walkers had kept her in this world far too long...and now these idiots had destroyed it. Was it her birthday? It might have been; she's lost track of how long she's been trapped on this island. "Well...let's get him inside. There are...creatures in the forest you will not want to meet that prefer the night," said Circe.

Chloe glanced at the forest before shuddering and saying, "I can believe that."

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Hiccup's friends landed in the courtyard of Circe's villa as soon as the troopers with them had relayed the message, including the bad news. As they arrived, Circe had gotten her minions to drag out what looked like a gold chest. "The MandÃ½a Kiĭ±demÃ³noĭ±n," said Circe, pulling out an ebony scaled cloak.

"Cool cloak," said Snotlout, "Can I try it on after Hiccup?"

"NO!" snapped Circe, causing everyone to jump before she said "It is meant for healing, not humans who prance like peacocks."

"I do not prance like a peacock," protested Snotlout before turning to the others and asking, "What's a peacock?"

"It is a bird whose males are known more for their flair than their brains," said Circe with a smirk, even Hookfang grinning at that.

"That sounds like him," said Astrid.

Circe carefully put the cloak around Hiccup's neck at that, fastening it with a clasp that reminded Matt of a Chinese dragon. The cloak glowed for a second before Circe said, "Guards, take him to a suite. He will need time to rest. His dragon companion should be able to fit into the northern room, it has a large enough balcony."

"How long will it take him to recover?" asked Astrid.

"A day at most, less if he is stronger," said Circe, noticing Matt's glare as her guards lifted the unconscious Hiccup up.

Chloe was also distrustful, muttering to Talia, "Tell WARDEN and Chip to run a search on this lady."

"And see if the scanners can tell us exactly what these 'guards' are," muttered Matt, "I'm pretty sure they're not a natural species." The trooper nodded before walking off. "Meanwhile, we might as well show a little trust. I doubt she'd have cured Hiccup if she wanted to off us," said Matt.

Then Circe said, "Now then, I'm sure you're all hungry after your long trip. Allow me to provide you with a feast as a token of my generosity."

"Now we're talking," said Snotlout.

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Matt looked at the spread in front of him before looking at their benefactor. "So...Circe. How long have you been on this rock?" he asked, shaking his head as his hand stopped an inch from the food.

"Many, many years," said Circe, "I have had some visitors that were pleasant enough to be entertained, but it has been a long, long time since I've been able to talk with more...enlightened guests."

"For someone who's been living here so long, you look pretty well," commented Chloe, "I'd say you weren't that much older than me."

"The wonders of my work have extended my life...a...what's the human word? A perk?" said Circe with a smirk, noticing that Chloe seemed to also have trouble gripping the food, some of their men also taking notice and not eating. "Is there something wrong with my meal?" she asked, "I would have expected you to have been quite hungry."

"I'm...I'm not that hungry," said Matt, as the Atlantean symbols appeared in his vision like they had a few weeks ago, a wire grid appearing on his food before what looked like a chemical analysis began. "Yeah, I think I need some fresh air," he said, getting up

Circe looked disappointed and said, "Don't stay outside too long. The beasts of the jungle get bolder after dark."

Matt walked out into the courtyard and took a few deep breaths until the HUD vanished...and a call came in. Chip's voice said, "Matt, you haven't had any of the food here yet, have you?"

"No. Only a few of us. I think that Atlantean update to my nanotech's removed the safeguards. I couldn't even grab it, think Chloe took a drink though," said Matt.

"Well, that's probably for the best. I found references to Circe, but I'm not entirely certain if they apply to this one. Have you ever read the Odyssey?" asked Chip.

"Long ago, yeah," said Matt.

"Do you recall the part where Odysseus had to deal with an enchantress who lives on an island of beasts?" asked Chip.

"Yes? What's this got to do with Circe?" said Matt, though he was already getting an idea why it was.

"Well, this enchantress had a pretty low view of men and commonly transformed any male visitors to her island into a beast that reflects his nature, most commonly pigs," said Chip, "And can you guess what this enchantress's name was?"

"Circe...I don't get it. She's helping Hiccup and she offered it," said Matt into his comm.

"Well, this Circe may not be like the mythological Circe," said Chip, "She might share a name and similar home, but that doesn't make them exactly alike."

"Ok, I did get a weird readout from my nanites...more Atlantean crap. Gonna beam it to you. Let's see if this new wrist comp cuts it," said Matt, poking the Atlantean wristcomp he had nicked from Taleth's men, a light sourced hologram keyboard appearing and allowing Matt to send the download.

Chip was able to detect the new hardware Matt was using. "Fancy new watch," Chip commented, "But haven't I seen that model being used by the Shar-Virk?"

"It was being used. I nicked it off their new girl," said Matt smugly.

"Your banshee fangirl?" asked Chip.

"Yeah...and don't call her that. Look, what is that thing? It panicked my nanites enough that they stopped me even touching it," said Matt sternly.

"Patience, it takes time for analysis," said Chip.

"You have a 4 digit IQ, this should be a cakewalk," snapped Matt before lowering his voice again as he heard scrabbling in the shadows. "I'll call you back," said Matt before hanging up.

With that, Matt unclasped his ion blade and shifted his eyes to draconic form and was able to pick out several shadows helping each other over the villa's wall. "Hello," he muttered, stepping into the shadows himself.

There was some growling and Matt wasn't entirely sure what kind of animal it was like. He winced again at, once more the HUD appeared. "Scanning...sentients detected," the AI chimed calmly.

"Um, whoever you are, I think we have a meaningful conversation...assuming you can talk," said Matt. Several whisperings were heard before an arrow shot out and shattered next to Matt's head. Matt glared and said, "Now that was just plain uncivil."

Several voices could be heard whispering in a mix of dialects, including a splitter accent, if Matt wasn't mistaken. "You won't stop

us," said a young sounding voice suddenly in NSC standard, though a little archaic.

"Stop you from what?" asked Matt.

"We're gonna kill the witch," said another voice, equally as young.

Matt rolled his eyes and slowly sneaked along the shadows towards where his nanites highlighted the now visible shapes, teenagers from the size though their build was not recognizable. He readied a small plasma pulse in his hand. Not enough to cause damage, but enough to stun. "You seem a bit young for an assault team. This isn't Mobius," he said, cheerfully as he headed closer.

There was angrier growling. "We are in the right. You will not stand in our way!" snarled the first voice.

"Really? You look like a bunch of kids...and yes I can see you," said Matt, grinning, his teeth sharpening to draconic ones. The group jumped at that, completely taken by surprise. Matt grinned even wider. "That's right kiddies. I'm a professional and you aren't...and I see yooooouâ€|" he taunted, now just round the corner from them.

There was a yelp of fright before a spear was suddenly thrown at Matt. Matt grabbed it, his hand glowing and causing the spearhead to evaporate. "Now that's just naughty," said Matt, throwing the plasma burst at the sky and illuminating the trio.

He immediately noticed, as he suspected, that they weren't human. There was one who had a passing resemblance to a splitter, though the head was too serpentine and there was too much tail and not enough leg. One looked like a humanoid kangaroo, obviously female. The third was a lion man, though his mane was not fully grown, showing his immaturity.

He could also see the fear and anger in their stances. "Ok, whose first?" he said.

The splitter snake hissed before opening his mouth and extending two fangs. Matt had expected him to lunge, but he instead shot out twin streams of venoms from his fangs. Matt immediately held up his hand and a plasma shield incinerated the venom. "Strike one," he said, sending a stunner pulse into snake guy's chest.

The kangaroo girl ran forward and started laying a barrage of kickboxing moves on Matt. Matt staggered back before a kick sent him flying. "That deals with..." began the kangaroo girl before a tesla blast stunned her.

"Strike two," said Matt, now in his hybrid form and looking annoyed.

The lion man roared before pulling out a sword. Matt raised an eyebrow and said, "Really? You brought a sword to a gun fight?"

"What's a gun?" said the lion man before Matt raised his tesla stunner and electrocuted him.

"Strike three...and you are definitely out. Team, get out here...team?" he said, getting static. Switching frequencies, Matt asked, "Chip, WARDEN, can you hear me?"

"I'm online sir. You're the first person we've heard from in the last 15 minutes. Chip has finished the analysis. It's an advanced mutagen, Asgardian in origin. I am guessing Miss Circe is not a licensed physician," said WARDEN.

"Not like her mythological counterpart, my foot," grumbled Matt, "WARDEN, feel free to smack Chip for not being suspicious enough."

"Yes, sir. I have rebooted the ship scanners. They indicate patches of hybrid lifesigns throughout this island. Scans also indicate energy weapon residue...dated for several solar orbits ago," said WARDEN, calmly.

"I've just met three examples of the hybrids," stated Matt.

"Sir, I have just pinpointed your team. 35% of their lifesigns are fluctuating. I am also receiving mutagen alerts from your sister's nanite network," said WARDEN urgently.

Matt rolled his eyes and said, "Not again. She better have her own mind this time." Matt turned to leave at that and saw several of Circe's minions, looking at the unconscious trio, impressed. "Yes? Is there a problem?" he asked sarcastically.

"The mistress wishes to speak with you," said a panther man.

"Right after I...take these kids home," said Matt, glaring at the guards warningly.

"You need not trouble yourself with such a trivial task," said a buffalo man, "We can see to these miscreants for you."

Matt glared, saying, "If it's all the same, I'll do it."

"The mistress's summons is more important. It would be unwise for you to ignore it," said one that looked like some member of the weasel family which Matt couldn't think of right now.

"Now then, how would you 'handle' these kids who have all the military experience of a rock?" said Matt coldly.

"With discipline, of course," said the buffalo man, "Spare the rod and spoil the child."

"Ok...how about no? Tell your 'mistress' that a...void walker doesn't answer to her," said Matt, noticing out the corner of his eye that the kangaroo girl was faking her unconsciousness.

Whether it was the message itself or Matt referring to himself as a 'void walker', it really set the guards off. "The mistress wants those rejects..." snapped one of the guards, stepping forward and being punched so hard he span in place.

Matt glanced at the kangaroo girl who was up and moving. "You're

tougher than you look," he complimented.

"Huh...I still don't trust-" she began before a plasma blast shot past her head and into the head of a guard aiming at her, stunning him.

The remaining guard, the buffalo man, let out a bellow before lowering his head and charging forward. Matt glared at that before spreading his wings and taking off at the last second. "Thick as a plank," he muttered as the buffalo guard slammed into the wall, out cold before landing to see the other kids coming around. "Ok, explanations, now," he snapped.

The lion man shook his head and said, "You should know by now. I knew she was saving the power of the dragon for someone special. At least you're someone who won't fall under her thrall so easily."

"Only been on this planet a month. Only got here yesterday...had the scales up to 3 years now," said Matt before looking at his scanner. "Now get out of here. It's clear these guys want your head...and I'm about to demolish the place," he said.

"That would be unwissse," hissed the splitter-snake, "There have been others who have attempted to overthrow the enchantresss before. All were...made examplsss of."

Matt looked around before tossing an energy ball overarm at the wall...which vanished. "I think I'm good," said Matt, walking past the shocked trio.

...

"Daya...Paulus...we got to go after him. He's gonna get killed and the village could use him," said the kangaroo hybrid, called Salia.

"He could alssso be a danger to the village," said the snake-splitter called Daya, "He ssseemsss quick to anger and he could level the whole village on hisss own."

"He saved us from being captured...even if he did beat us up," said Salia.

"We could have been jussst lucky to avoid mossst of his wrath," said Daya.

Paulus said, "He did say he was a soldier. He and his people may be the best chance we have."

"Perhapsss...but how are we sssuppossse to convince him to come to the village?" asked Daya.

"We'll cross that bridge when we reach it," said Salia, running after Matt.

...

Circe was sat at the new deserted banquet table, not even flinching when the double doors exploded into splinters. "Knock-knock," called Matt, strolling inside.

"You missed out on a lovely meal," said Circe.

"You never know what my ship says was in that food. It's, oh you'll laugh, that you were trying to poison me," said Matt, his tone turning vicious.

"Not poison, potion," said Circe, "You see, trading is not so easy here with so few resources. So I offer something a bit more precious to visitors, something that they take for granted every day."

"And what might that be?" said Matt, before absently firing a shot into the shadows above, a guard with a crossbow falling down with a smoking hole in him. "I'm sorry, what were you saying?" he said.

Circe glared at Matt and said, "I wish you wouldn't do that? You know how hard it is to get new specimens?"

"So...what's your story? Disgruntled Executive Genetics scientist? Doctor who lost her license? Batshit bonkers?" said Matt, walking up the room, backhanding a charging guard into unconsciousness.

"I'll have you know that I was the greatest sorceress and scientist in Asgard," snapped Circe, "I paved the road for future generations of my people to stride boldly. However, they considered my contribution to biological science was...unacceptable."

"Oh...Asgardian. Then you know all about the NSC and their policies on renegades," said Matt, cheerfully.

"I have been unable to keep up with the outside universe, thanks in part to your Atlantean superiors," said Circe.

"Atlanteans? Man, you're way out of touch. I'm a mercenary, so any of those rules about having to take you back alive are at my leisure to ignore," said Matt, reaching forward only for a silver blur to send him flying.

Circe smiled and said, "Your sister seems to lack your suspicions as well as your strength of will."

Matt got up unsteadily, mostly because a vase was stuck over his head...well, before it exploded anyway. "CHLOE...!" he snapped before stopping as he saw the white furred wolf anthro. "Oh, you gotta be kidding," he snapped.

"Yes, she's quite impressive, isn't she?" said Circe, "She'll be my second-greatest creation ever."

"Tell me, have you ever heard of a Shar-Khan?" asked Matt.

"The Atlantean breeding project, wasn't it?" asked Circe, "I've heard they couldn't get off the ground."

"Wrong," said Matt, opening his mouth and spitting a plasma blast into Chloe's chest before shifting to hybrid form and drawing his ion blade. "Nobody mutates my little sister...so I'm afraid I have to kill you," snapped Matt.

"Your sister...hasn't she gone through the same genetic retrofitting as you?" asked Circe. Matt nodded before a lightning blast pinned him against the wall. "She is more valuable than I ever imagined," said Circe, "Let us see if your metamorphosis capabilities is still operational."

Chloe's fur stood on end as the static electricity built up. However, instead of sprouting wings or horns, a discharge of electrical energy spread out from her. Matt gulped as the charge got closer, his nanites flashing warnings before he said "Sorry Chloe," blasting the roof to bring it down. The stone roof quickly gave way, causing a small avalanche of rubble to fall on top of Chloe.

Matt glared at Circe. "This isn't over. I've got tanks!" he yelled, turning to run and piling into the trio again. Matt gave them an annoyed look and said, "This is a really bad time to be attacking."

"YOU...GUARDS!" yelled Circe, seeing the trio and surprising Matt with her yell.

"Listen, we really need to get out of here," said Matt.

"I know, follow us," said the lion man.

Matt looked to see Circe waving guards in their direction before he said, "No...I lead the way, follow me and stay close."

...

Meanwhile, the dragon riders were in a different part of Circe's mansion. They had left dinner early to check on Hiccup. Snotlout looked a little pale as the group walked out to the rooftop near Hiccup's room where their dragons were resting. "You ok?" asked Astrid as Snotlout burped weakly, almost sounding like a grunt.

"What's with him?" asked Ruffnut.

"Foreign cuisine, it tends to upset sensitive stomachs," said Fishlegs.

"Him? Sensitive?" questioned Tuffnut.

An explosion was heard at that moment from the courtyard, Astrid sighing as Tuffnut said "Matt's really taking the Viking cover to the limit. He even got the traditional banquet fight going."

"I hope they left something for us to eat, I'm starving," said Ruffnut.

The sound of laser fire was heard at that, not that far away, though the gang ignored it as just more of the usual before they finally came to Hiccup's room to find Toothless outside, clawing at the door along with Starflame who was simply waiting.

"It looks like Toothless really wants in," said Fishlegs.

"Geeze, he can't stay away from him for five minutes, can he?" said Snotlout before letting out an even louder belch.

Astrid gave a sigh of disgust and turned around saying, "Snotlout, you are such a..." She paused after she looked at him and finished weakly, "Pig?"

Snotlout, now sporting a pig snout instead of a nose, said "What? Is there something on my face?"

The others stared before Fishlegs asked, "Which one of us should tell him?"

Astrid gulped before slowly lifting up her axe to show the reflection to Snotlout who just stared, Tuffnut saying after a minute, "I think it broke him."

Just then, Toothless made a more frantic sound and tried to slam the door down. "Uh, you don't think..." started Fishlegs.

On cue they turned to hear someone running out onto the rooftop, turning to see Techo. "Kids? What the smeg are you doing? Get outta here," he snapped. He paused when he saw Snotlout's nose and said, "I don't suppose that's only a party mask."

"I don't think so. What were you running from?" asked Astrid before a shape smashed out into the roof, one of Matt's men, though the eyes and hands that were visible weren't human.

"That," said Techo, firing at the trooper until he fell, which wasn't far from them, "Everyone who ate something went weird not long after Matt wandered off."

"That would explain Snoutlout here," said Tuffnut.

"Hey!" snapped Snotlout.

"Look, everyone who didn't eat anything split up. We're getting the hell out. Let's get Hiccup and bloody leg it," said Techo, trying the door, finding it locked, shrugging and taking off his glove to reveal a silver segmented hand that easily tore the lock off. "What? Never seen bionics before? Matt's got one now too," he said, tossing the lock over the side.

"I wondered how he recovered after that Taleth pummeled him so badly," said Astrid.

Techo peered in to see the lights were off. "Hiccup, rise and shine. We are leaving!" he yelled, not one for subtlety. There was a loud groan, that didn't quite sound like Hiccup. "Erm...Hicc-wow!" said Techo, being shocked as Toothless pushed him aside to get in. "Hiccup, get the hell up, we are out of here. Circe's a psycho."

There was an odd draconic growling. "Uh, Toothless, that was you, right?" asked Astrid.

Toothless shook his head, backing up as Techo's wristcomp, an old souvenir from his time in the NSC military chimed "Alert...hostile intent from hybrid lifeform."

"Uh oh..." said Techo, backing up.

"Hiccup?" tried Astrid before hearing that the fighting had stopped.

"Well...I did wonder where you all got too," said Circe's voice behind them, Techo spinning and emptying a clip into her. However, the bullets didn't even get near Circe, most of them ricocheting off or stopping dead about five inches in front of her.

"I hate Asgardians," muttered Techo to himself before the others closed ranks with him.

'You're not getting near Hiccup," snapped Astrid before Circe sighed "Let's leave that to him. Oh pet, please subdue these fools...alive please."

There was a snarling sound as the group turned to see something large with wings rising up from the bed.

The beast men might have done something, had Barf and Belch not chosen to act, along with the other dragons, bar Toothless and Starflame who were looking in shock into the room

Circe gave the dragons an annoyed look and said, "I should have taken care of them first. Guards, restrain those dragons!"

Astrid glared at that, punching one guard who was immediately spiked by Stormfly before Toothless and Starflame were sent flying out of the room, a third Night Fury crashing out. However, there were three unusual things about the Night Fury. One, it was a head taller than Toothless or Starflame. Two, it had a small mark on its throat that looked a bit like a Chinese dragon. And three, its left hind leg ended with a disproportionate metal foot.

The Fury turned to glare at Astrid at that, a well-aimed plasma blast knocking her axe flying as she made the connection. "Hiccup?" she said before a much larger ion blast knocked him on his tail.

"What part of 'leg it' failed to communicate?" snapped Techo, before he jumped off the roof to a lower balcony. The others quickly scrambled towards the exit, the dragons' distraction allowing them to slip by most of the beast men.

...

Matt was being followed by the trio. "I am not leaving without the kids," he snapped for the fifth time.

"You're wasting your time," said Paulus, "They've probably turned into beasts like the rest of your crew. We need to fortify a plan in the safety of the village if we are to rescue them."

Matt picked up a rifle, probably discarded by a mutating trooper before calmly machine-gunning some shadows, two guards waiting in ambush falling down. "I said NO!" he snapped, his eyes shining red.

"Be reasonable. How many of them do you really expect to be able to

find in their human state?" said Paulus.

Matt turned to glare. "Fine...but I am finding them," he said before looking out a window and saying in a puzzled voice. "And there they go...that was surprisingly easy," he said before he heard a thud from above.

"What wasss that?" asked Daya.

Matt sniffed before sighing "It's just Toothless and Starflame...and Toothless?" he said, sniffing again from puzzlement.

Daya flicked his tongue out and hissed, "The enchantresss's magic isss new and clossse."

Matt peered out to look up to see an unidentified Night Fury peering down. "Erm...hi?" he tried.

"Intruders..." it hissed.

"Wait...do I know..." began Matt before bowing grabbed in the new dragon's mouth and thrown over the perimeter wall.

"Circe has used the Cloak of Guardians after all," said Salia. "Thiss will be a problem," said Daya.

Paulus said nervously, "He looks hungry...retreat time?"

"I think our 'hero' can be convinced now," said Daya.

...

Kala groaned, coming too to see Toothless nudging him. _"But I don't wanna go to school maaaaa€|"_ she said dizzily.

"We don't have time for that," snapped Toothless, _"Hiccup is in trouble, really big trouble."_

"You mean apart from the new body and the fact he sucker punched us through sandstone?" Kala groaned.

"Yes, I think that witch may have imprisoned his mind as well," said Toothless.

"No...really," said Kala sarcastically. Her trip through the wall had removed her usual ability to be sympathetic.

"Hiccup would never take orders to hurt his friend, especially after what she did to him," growled Toothless.

"Look, I think I...oooh," said Kala, watching as Hiccup sent Matt flying, _"Yeah, I think Matt has the right idea. We got to run. We can't win this."_

"I can't fly without Hiccup," said Toothless, waving his tail for emphasis.

"That's why I said run!" snapped Kala.

Toothless growled with agitation before jumping down to the ground.

Kala followed, gliding and seeing what was left of Matts team running for it, firing wildly while arrows and Atlantean staff energy blasts rained into them...it was a mess. The other dragons had managed to collect their riders and were flying off. Though Snotlout was having a little trouble hanging on as his hands were turning into hooves.

A few of the guards turned to fire on Toothless, others throwing a net. Kala hesitated, she felt she may be able to carry Toothless, but she wasn't so sure about she'd be able to stay in the air for very long. _"Get out of here!"_ yelled Toothless before swatting at the guards. Kala glared before sighing and following the retreating troopers.

...

Matt groaned, noticing he was embedded in a rock. "Bad...dragon," he groaned before hands pulled him free.

"Let's go, move it!" yelled the trooper before an energy orb exploded against his back

Matt shook his head to allow his vision to clear. It was then he noticed several beast men guards with Atlantean staffs. "You have got to be kidding me," he said. A few shots lanced past him, something in Matt snapping as the past few month's stress collapsed down on him at once. "Leave...me...ALONE!" he roared, any watchers being blinded by a bright flash of plasma that shot out for 50 feet in all directions. The guards were definitely taken care of by the blast, but unfortunately, that blast cost most of Matt's energy reserves.

It would have been his end had Paulus not grabbed him in passing, Salia waving to the retreating troopers to follow her. With little other option, the troopers followed them, if only because they had the captain.

...

Circe grinned as the Night Fury was dragged in by her guards before one of her bruised guards walked up. "My lady...the other Atlantean...her nanolathes have overridden your spells control. We had to subdue her."

Circe sighed and said, "I thought it was a little too good to be true. I suppose I'll have to keep her on a tight leash until I can assert a more permanent control."

"My lady. I must say, the Atlanteans may not be as merciful this time," said the guard, nervously. His grandfather had told him the stories of how, despite their lady's magical devices, the Atlanteans had simply rained fire upon them from the stars until landing their warriors to mop up. He had no wish to relive it.

Circe smiled and said, "There is nothing to worry about. According to our guests, the Atlanteans are no longer in power or even in existence. They even destroyed the great snake that acted as jail keeper over this world."

The guard let out a secret sigh of relief at the realization that laser death wouldn't be arriving from on high any time soon. "In fact, all we need is a working starship to finally leave this

planet," said Circe, "That's the one last thing I need from Captain Lynch and his crew."

"You want us to attack them? They will no doubt be prepared for us..." said the guard nervously before backing up from Circe's glare and trying something else, "What of the others? Many of them fled with the three rejects."

"I have spared those rejects the full fury of my wrath for too long," said Circe, "Their futile rebellion has been amusing for a while, but today is the last time. It is time we taught them all a lesson once and for all. We have taken most of Lynch's men. What few remain won't be able to stop us."

"As you wish, my lad-" began the guard before the ground shook again, smoke rising from the volcano, which had been hit by some kind of meteor a fortnight earlier.

Circe looked towards the volcano with a slightly worried look on her face. "We may have less time than I anticipated. We must not delay any longer. Lynch's ship must be ours by tomorrow dawn."

"Yes, my lady. Force one, head for the void walker's vessel and take it. Force two, with me. Force 3, defend your mistress and her pet," said the guard.

Circe smiled to herself as her forces departed. "First, I shall be liberated from this primitive world. Then I shall take my vengeance on those who imprisoned me here. After which...well, I suppose there will be a vacancy for a new power in the multiverse."

...

Matt came too to see a thatched roof in his field of vision and a water soaked cloth on his forehead. A dull ache in his bones quickly reminded him of the brutal beating he had gotten from that Night Fury. "Hello?" he said, looking over to see his things were in the corner. There was a whimpering sound and Matt looked over to see Starflame by his bed. "I should have known you'd be near," he said, rubbing her head.

"Yes, we couldn't keep her away," said a voice, Matt looking up to see a splitter, in an old splitter empire uniform checking a medical scanner. "You're lucky to be breathing," she said loftily.

"I'm tougher than I look," said Matt, trying to ignore the ache.

"Indeed...interesting gene-implants in your bloodwork. I'm assuming the prelate finally sent mercenaries to rescue us," said the splitter calmly..

"Er, you've been stuck here a long time, haven't you?" asked Matt.

"Several hundred solar cycles to date. A machine in orbit forced our ship down and an unidentified humanoid had her...mutants pick my crew off. The people here gave me sanctuary after my medical skills proved a help. Dania Kaviar, chief medical officer," said the splitter

"Matthew Lynch, captain of the North Star," replied Matt.

"North Star. There is no mercenary ship with that designation," said Dania, calmly, helping Matt to a sitting position and proceeding to run a dermal regenerator over a cut.

"Well, there are a couple of explanations. First of all, my real captaincy was on the Bladestorm, but it got blown up," said Matt.

"Bladestorm? That's a rebel ship." said Dania.

"You've heard about the Civil War?" asked Matt, surprised.

"Last I heard it was still raging. I am guessing that we lost." said Dania, coldly

"Well, there's a different Civil War going on now," said Matt.

"Hmph...so...are you here to arrest me or save me?" said Dania.

"I'm tempted to say 'save you', but it looks like we need a little saving ourselves," said Matt.

"As does everyone here. Come, human," said Dania, pulling Matt up, a little harshly before walking out into a small village, dozens of various mutants all walking around. "These people were lucky enough to stay sane after Circe got to them. As a result, when I was taken in, they were being systematically slaughtered."

"Yes, this Circe seems to think of herself as an advanced version of Dr. Moreau," said Matt.

"That is not all. A fortnight ago, I monitored an energy build up near the volcano on island 3. At the current rate of energy growth, a class two pyroclastic blast will occur within between 72 and 48 hours," said Dania

"That's enough to destroy this archipelago, isn't it?" asked Matt.

"Yes, though not powerful enough to damage the local biosphere." said Dania

"I suppose that's a small mercy, but we'd still have to evacuate everyone. Well, evacuate everyone with enough sanity to be treated. Circe can stay and burn for all I care," said Matt.

"That will be hard. There are nearly 70 families here of varying sizes," said Dania, walking along with Matt through the village.

"That might not be as much of a problem as you think," said Matt, "The North Star's bigger than you know. However, Circe's definitely not going to just let us go. Especially since she'll most likely want the ship for herself."

"That is good news. The rest of your men are this way. Many seem to

have ingested her potion. I do however have a remedy," said Dania.

"Great, I'd hate to have to hire a veterinarian," said Matt.

"Hmm...that would be a problem for logistics," said Dania before Techo walked out of an alley.

"Boss, you're back on your feet again," he said cheerfully, stopping to glare at Dania.

Matt noticed the glare and said, "This is not a time for old defunct feuds, Techo. Have we salvaged everything we need from the Bladestorm yet?"

"We got bigger problems. Snotty got a little...worse," said Techo, stepping side.

Matt looked down to see a medium-sized pig. Matt would have questioned why it mattered but he noticed the familiar helmet that's been tied to his head. "Snotlout?" he asked with disbelief. The pig glared at that. Matt stopped. "Wait, we all ate and drank except you and me, Techo. The others?" he said, pushing past.

He soon found Fishlegs who had his back turned to Matt. He didn't seem very different until Matt noticed the flattened tail protruding from under his shirt. "Uh, Fishlegs?" asked Matt.

Fishlegs turned around, showing his furry face and buck teeth. "Hey Matt, you're looking better," he said before gnawing more on the sugar cane he was holding.

"Yeah...and you...need a shave," said Matt faintly.

"It's not so bad," said Fishlegs, "I mean, I've got all the fat I need to make it through the winter. I just need to make a big enough dam."

Techo said quickly, "Dania administered the antidote as fast as she could but some of the instincts are still poking them.

Dania nodded, "He's lucky. He'll be human again by the end of the day."

"I see..." said Matt uneasily, "Where are the twins?"

Techo pointed at an open area where Tuffnut and Ruffnut, both looking like satyrs, were butting heads with each other. "Yeah...we're trying to explain that one too," said Techo.

Matt sighed "And Astrid?" he said.

"She was lucky. I administered her antidote before the potion went live," said Dania, pointing to where Astrid was sparring with a guard.

"Oh, so nothing's wrong with her," said Matt with a little relief.

"I wouldn't say that. My temporal scanner shows a large magi burst in her near future," said Dania

"That's unusual," remarked Matt before shrugging, "Anything else I should know?"

Draco flew down onto a nearby hut and said, "Hey, Matt, you're gonna want to see- Hey, a pig, can I eat it?"

"That's Snotlout!" snapped Techo.

"Is that a 'yes' or 'no'?" asked Draco.

"It's a reluctant no," said Matt gloomily before adding "What do I want to see?"

"Well, we've been going through the wreckage of the Bladestorm and you're not gonna believe who we found inside," said Draco.

"You found my comics?" said Matt eagerly

"Well, yes, you ought to find out how they produced those impenetrable plastic wraps," said Draco, "But this is a bit more important."

Matt heard a growing rumble and the sound of mechanical gears whirring. He quickly turned around to see something large approaching. He was about to blast it when it said in an irritated tone, "Captain Lynch, I hope you have an explanation for why the students are tardy."

"Oh crap," muttered Matt before saying, "We were attacked by a assault bot the size of a moon and crashed." to the machine that was causing the village guard to scramble.

"Ms. Lilo Pelekai, Ms. Megan Roph, and Mr. Gaheris Lesog have been absent for 78 days, 13 hours, and 54 minutes. They have undoubtedly had a considerable drop in the grade point average," said the robot.

"Look...for the second time. The ship's destroy...wait, Gary's full name is Gaheris?" said Matt, breaking into a grin.

"That was it says on my student files," said the robot, flashing Gary's profile onto its screen.

Matt grinned before shaking his head. "Update and synch with North star mainframe," he said, making a note to tease Gary over this.

"Update commencing..." stated the robot before a progress bar appeared on its screen.

Dania gave the robot an odd look and said, "This robot is clearly designed for combat and yet it acts like a tutoring program."

"That's because a friend turned it into a teaching machine for our...tougher personnel," said Matt, "I'll introduce you to them if we live through this."

The machine pinged before saying, "Tutorbot 3.0 update complete, considering the current status of the crew, the curriculum shall be temporarily adjusted to focus on survival techniques."

"Good, but for now...override alpha 42, switch to original combat protocol," said Matt.

Tutorbot's screen flashed an image of a chalkboard before shifting it to a battle grid. "Combat programing activated," it said in a considerably less friendly tone, "Identify targets."

"All targets within this settlement and all NSC tier crew," said Matt.

"Acknowledged," said Tutorbot before bringing its guns to bear on them.

"Uh, Matt, I think you need to rephrase that," said Techo.

"I meant all targets in settlement and NSC tier as friendlies!" screamed Matt.

There was an uncomfortably long pause before Tutorbot said, "Voice print confirmed, adjusting settings." Its guns then powered down.

"Good," said Dania, finally breathing again before she said, "Paulus said that you were very intent on finding someone else...someone called Hiccup?"

"Right, we brought him here to be treated for blood fever," said Matt, "I bet the 'good doctor' had a different idea about 'treatment'."

"Indeed. She was intent on using an Asgardian artifact for a host but most subjects died. It turned out it was keyed to Norse terran blood," said Dania.

"And what is this artifact?" asked Matt.

"I don't know, but it is one of a small series. The one she based it off was apparently retaken by an ancient taskforce working with the Asgardians...but the one she uses seems to use far eastern ones. She called it the Cloak of Guardians," said Dania.

"That doesn't sound so evil," said Techo.

"She added her own brainwashing magi systems to it," added Dania flatly

"That definitely sounds bad," said Techo.

"It is. He needs to be snapped out of it. Artifacts like this are mental related. We need to snap him out of the brainwashing before he is lost to it," said Dania.

"Ok, any idea how?" asked Matt.

"No idea...true love?" said Dania sarcastically.

"Let's save that for a back-up plan," said Matt.

"Warning...unidentifieds are entering scanner range," said Tutorbot.

"Hold fire until we have a visual," commanded Matt.

Dania however was sniffing the air. "Oh no...they're coming..."

"Tutorbot, prepare to engage enemies," said Matt.

On cue, the village wall exploded as something shot overhead. "Aerial target approaching," announced Tutorbot as it angled its guns upward. Matt and the others looked up in time for a familiar shape to slam down and blast Tutorbot to pieces. The group winced as Tutorbot's head went flying over them shouting a pre-programmed "AAAAAAARRRRGGGHHH!"

The Night Fury looked around with an angry look, Dania saying "She actually did it...that witch."

"I was hoping that I had misremembered that part," said Matt.

"Hiccup?" said Astrid, before trying to run forward before a plasma blast and arrow combo nearly stopped her.

...

Kala knew that she would have to fight Dragon-Hiccup again, but she had hoped it would be the 'final boss fight' at Circe's mansion. Still, she didn't hesitate about charging him. "Hiccup, snap out of it. Don't make me hurt you!" she yelled, circling above him.

Hiccup just roared before firing a plasma blast at Kala. Kala glared and thanked her lucky stars that she had practiced, rolling neatly to avoid the shots. The process that had done this had clearly not provided experience beyond flight skills. She took a moment to size up her opponent. Hiccup may be larger than she or Toothless, but he still had that pegleg. That ought to work as a disadvantage, right?

"Hiccup, I know you can understand me. You're attacking your friends, you're attacking Toothless!" she roared, wincing as these words provided a distraction for Matt to toss a plasma blast of his own to little effect.

Hiccup's eyes seemed to soften for a second, but then he cringed in pain before letting out another roar and blasting Matt. Kala rolled her eyes before swooping at Hiccup to tackle him from the side and roaring in his face "GET A GRIP!"

Hiccup struggled before saying, "Cloak...too...strong...mistress...power...great..."

Kala sighed before trying a tried and tested method for when Draconus tried what the cloak did; she headbutted Hiccup between the eyes. If

nothing else, it at least dazed him, seeing how his eyes were spinning. _"Now BEHAVE!"_ she roared.

That might have worked, but then Kala noticed something glimmering and she looked down to see the Eastern dragon mark on his chest moving on its own. Kala looked closer at it only for it to flash a light in her face, dazing her. Kala winced and closed her eyes, which gave Hiccup the opening to return her blow.

Several laser bolts and arrows lanced out at that, the medallion glowing and apparently giving Hiccup the skills needed to dodge the blasts and use his tail to harmlessly flick the arrows away.

Then Toothless himself barreled and tackled Hiccup. He may not be able to fly right now, but that didn't stop him from attacking him on the ground. _"Hiccup, you have to wake up,"_ he said, desperately before Hiccup threw him off

Hiccup seemed to struggle before saying,
"Can't...cloak...won't...let...me..."

"Hiccup...please," said Toothless desperately before a tesla blast shot into Hiccup's back, joined by another continuous beam, two of Matt's men firing the anti-riot stun weapons on continuous setting

A third blast joined, much to Toothless's horror as he heard the third trooper say "He's passing out...pour it on, marines and get a restraint ready."

Toothless snarled and was about to spring forward when Kala said, _"Wait, it might be for the best. It'll keep him still long enough to try and get some sense through him."_

Matt could be heard yelling at the troopers to stop as Hiccup groaned, the amulet's jewels flickering.

Toothless growled and said, _"We need to get that thing off of him."_

"Good idea, problem is, these claws aren't exactly designed for precision surgery," said Kala, waving her paw around.

Hiccup groaned at that, _"What? Where am I?"_

"Sounds like he's more in control now," said Toothless.

"For the moment, but I might as well pass on a message first." She walked over to the dazed Hiccup. _"Ok, Hiccup, I need you to listen carefully. When we fix this and you're human again, PLEASE tell Matt that I'm really Kala, the missing crewmate he's been after. He'll know what you mean,"_ said Kala, urgently.

"Huh? Kala? That's a nice name. Sounds better than Starflame," said Hiccup, who didn't seem to be all the way there.

"HICCUP! FOCUS!" snapped Kala with the air of someone seeing an opportunity fleeing into the long grass.

Hiccup shook his head and said, _"Kala, this cloak hasn't given up. It's only a matter of time before that witch has me under her control

again. You need to find a way to get it off. I'm not sure if she'll leave enough of me next time to bring back."_

Kala and Toothless looked panicky at that for various reasons. For Toothless, it was the thought of losing his best friend and for Kala it was of being separated from Matt permanently. With a cry of desperation, Kala started clawing at the dragon mark to get it off.

On cue another tesla blast hit her in the back. "Don't hurt her, but get a restraint on Hiccup, now!" said Matt's voice.

Toothless decided that the humans at least need a clue about what to do so he got some mud from the ground and splatted it against the dragon mark. "What the hell's Toothless doing?" said one marine, proving the very reason Matt's team got into such fixes.

Toothless rolled his eyes and said, _"How can humans be so painfully oblivious?"_

"Matt goes for firepower skills first and brains second," said Kala as several troopers carefully used silver cabling to restrain Hiccup

"A bit like himself then?" teased Toothless.

"Yeah...uh oh," said Kala, noticing how Hiccup's little amulet was starting to glow again.

"How are we supposed to get them to notice it?" asked Toothless.

"Gee, maybe we should paint a big bull's eye over it," said Kala sarcastically.

Hiccup was wincing and shaking at the glow got brighter.

...

Circe glared and cursed adding a technological control to the cloak given that it was now having trouble reapplying the mental filters. "I should have sent some other flyers with him. But no, I just stuck with the dragon," she grumbled.

"My Lady. I have grim news. None of the men sent to the void walker's ship have returned. The last message was of iron arachnids."

"I should have known that they had a cargo of large automatons with them," said Circe.

"They claim they were small...then we heard...wheeâ€¦!" said the guard.

Circe blinked and said, "I'm going to pretend you described a more fitting demise for my guard and thus spare you of being my next rug."

"It's true..." said the guard, replaying the message, a voice saying "What in the realms is..." 'WHEEEEEEEE' before it cut off.

Circe's eye twitched as she said, "I have been having a progressively bad day. I've been losing my guards to rebellious rejects, interlopers are start to be more trouble than they're worth, and now little metal spiders. Not to mention the artifact I've been saving for centuries may have been wasted. If I hear one more setback that sounds even the slightest bit humorous, the unfortunate messenger will be shot, stuffed, and mounted. Am I clear?"

On cue, a tingling indicated that her mental connection was re-establishing and much to her anger, alot of nasty free will was loose. "Now, if you'll excuse me, I have an ultimate warrior to get back under my control," said Circe before concentrating.

...

Matt peered in at Hiccup who had stopped shaking and was trying to break his bonds. "Real mind whammy," he muttered.

"This is why I hate mind control," said Techo, "I mean, it's bad enough when the villains are using it on innocent bystanders, but they can't resist using it on your strongest friends."

"This isn't magic. Something called the Cloak of Guardians wouldn't come with a remote," said Matt, peering in before looking over at Astrid. As soon as Hiccup had been grabbed, Circe's men had turned tail and run.

"He is still in there, right?" asked Astrid.

Matt looked at his wristcomp and nodded as the results tested good. "Yeah...under alot of nasty mind whammy," he said.

"Well, at least the cloak did what it was supposed to with that blood fever," said Lao as he checked Hiccup's vitals, "I suppose dragons are not as vulnerable to poisoning as other creatures."

"How do we know it won't come back when that thing's taken off?" said Techo, only for Dania to take a look with her own scanner.

"Ji'dok inika." it chimed, Dania nodding. "He's clean. No sign of DNA poisoning, either in stasis or active."

"Well, that's good...except he doesn't have his own DNA at the moment," said Matt.

"Don't magic artifacts have a turn-off command like 'open sesame' or something?" asked Astrid.

"Yeah, shame we can't ask him where it hurts," said Matt, Hiccup glaring as the amulet blazed before he snapped at Matt.

"Hey, here's a wild thought: why don't we try prying off that artificial dragon mark?" said Techo sarcastically.

Matt looked at Techo before looking at the snarling Hiccup. "Any volunteers?" he said sarcastically.

"Uh, I wanna keep the one good arm I have left," said Techo.

"Same here," said Matt quickly.

"If I was Circe, I'd have a way to turn this off in case my pet monster went bananas and caught the Frankenstein effect," said Techo, before realizing what he said "Sorry...about the monster thing."

Hiccup snarled before snapping at him. "Not sure if that was Hiccup doing that, but I agree," said Astrid.

"Erm...sir?" said a trooper, pointing to where the restraint were giving out.

"Ok, probably gonna get mocked for this later, but do we have any dragonnips?" asked Matt.

"Too late, get back!" yelled Techo, diving back as Hiccup broke his restraints as Starflame and Toothless leapt forward, Matt and his team running the watching villagers to run for cover.

The only one who didn't run was Astrid who made a mad dash over to Hiccup. "Uh, you're supposed to run AWAY from the angry dragon!" called Techo. Matt sighed before swearing and running after her.

...

Astrid stopped in front of the three dragons, Toothless and Starflame surrounding Hiccup and not giving him the space needed for a takeoff. "Hiccup!" she called. Hiccup roared, but he didn't try to attack. "Hiccup...please. You're better than this. Whatever Circe did to you shouldn't have a hold," she said, slowly walking forward. Hiccup snarled, but it was more of a 'stay back' snarl than an 'I'm going to attack' snarl.

"Hiccup...please. We have to get that thing off you," said Astrid, slightly emboldened by the reaction as a good sign. Hiccup's expression did not change, but he slowly, and apparently forcibly, craned his neck upward, making the mark a lot easier to get at.

Matt, who was watching, held up his hand to stop his men intervening. This was a hair trigger situation. Any distraction or noise and it could turn nasty.

"Hiccup, whatever it is you're thinking about, hold on to it," said Astrid, "Don't let Circe take control. You have to hang on to what's really important to you."

Hiccup seemed to be trying before, just as Astrid was about to grab the artifact, his eyes flashed the same color as the mark and he snarled angrily.

"Astrid, I think you should move back now," said Lao.

"No, it's now or never," said Astrid before lunging forward and grabbing the artifact.

At the same time, Hiccup took off, resulting in Astrid hanging on, the roars indicating it wasn't painless.

"Techo, better get Stormfly!" called Matt, "Astrid, don't let go!"

"Like I have a choice!" snapped Astrid.

...

Circe glared while rubbing her forehead. The stupid child's mind had been harder to re-submerge than she had predicted and now she had a migraine. The sound of flapping got her attention at that, before an unexpected 'ouch' was heard as well.

She looked up to see her dragon hovering above and she looked down to see the Viking girl rubbing her sore wrist. Circe raised an eyebrow and said, "Well, this is certainly a surprise."

The Viking was immediately on her feet angrily. "You...you did this to hiccup!" she snapped, Circe impressed at either the blind suicidalness or bravery of the girl.

"You do realize who I am, do you?" Circe said calmly.

"I know you're a wicked witch with a twisted sense of what qualifies as a 'pet'," snapped Astrid.

"Less pet and more guardian, but he seems quite happy," said Circe, tauntingly stroking her pet's head after he had landed beside her.

"That's not even close to how he really feels," said Astrid, "If your guards had any real freedom, none of them would want to be anywhere near you."

"Well, seeing as none of you are leaving this island..." said Circe, yawning and pressing a rune on her throne secretly.

"I know at least you aren't," said Astrid, "Matt would rather be a salamander than take you on so much as a cruise around the island on his ship."

"He won't have a choice, especially since I have several of his crew, including his apparently sister...and now you," said Circe with a smirk just as the far doors burst open and several of Circe's guards piled in with crossbows.

"You won't turn me into a beast that easily," said Astrid.

"No, some kind of magic is stopping my concoction from working, but you'll make a great hostage. Take her away. If she resists, she can be my pet's first meal," said Circe calmly.

...

There were several suggestions for what to do next. Dania's suggestion for simply leaving was met with less than substantial support. "We are not leaving without Hiccup and Astrid!" snapped Matt.

Dania sighed. "Neither of us have the manpower to attack her villa and that volcano..." Dania said, pointing to where a black smokestack

was already billowing skywards, "...is going to go within 24 hours."

"Lack of manpower? I don't think you know how to measure manpower," said Matt.

"Because I'm not a man or because I'm not human?" said Dania scathingly.

Matt sighed. "The splitter empire's toast...and so is that sort of insult. Look, you've been here longer than us. You must know a way in otherwise you wouldn't be rescuing 'rejects'," said Matt, using the nickname for the rebels.

Dania hissed before saying, "There are a couple of ways in, but so far all attempts to exploit have..."

"Let me guess, they were made examples of," said Matt.

"I don't think she's really trying to cover all her bases," said Dania, "I think she's letting those vulnerable spots be open because she knows someone will try and they'll be captured. She's been drawing out our hope bit by bit."

"Well, she's not met us before...and neither have you. We can get in there..." began Matt only for Dania to snap "Fine...go to your deaths. You are not the first I have heard make these claims."

"There is a lot that separates us from those other guys," said Matt.

"Fine. It is foolhardy but...good luck, as you humans say...but I will not let you force those children and their companions to also die," said Dania, several of the guards aiming.

"I think you'll find that they'll have more issues with that than me," said Matt.

"Yeah. We're not gonna let these guys have all the fun," said Ruffnut, the twins and Fishlegs thankfully now human again, though Fishlegs hadn't let go of a stick he'd been chewing on yet.

Dania looked at them and said, "You are just children. You do not belong in a war, much less a war against a sorceress."

"They have our friends," said Fishlegs stubbornly.

"That's what they all said," said Dania, "Friends and family, everyone has lost someone in there and no one's came back out with them."

"How many had firearms?" said Matt.

Dania threw up her arms in disgust and said, "Fine, go rescue your two friends. Those of us who can still see reason will be on the ship."

"Fine...WARDEN. Take off at the last minute you have before you can't get clear," said Matt into his comm.

"Very well, sir. Also, I'd like to point out that we sent an upgrade to the nanites in your arm," said WARDEN, "Are you in an open space?"

"Uh, yeah, sure, I'm on the beach outside of the village," said Matt.

"You know, if it wasn't for the fact that an evil sorceress lives next door and this place is going to be destroyed by a volcano, this would be a very pleasant beach for a vacation," commented Fishlegs.

"Yeah...this happens more often than you think," said Matt.

"Excellent, I shall activate each individual upgrade remotely. After the demonstration, I shall unlock conscious activation for you," said WARDEN. With that, the very tip of Matt's index finger began glowing red.

Matt looked at it. "A laser pointer...really? And who gave you permission to play with my arm?" he snapped.

"Sir, you might be surprised when a tiny spot of intense light may come in handy," said WARDEN, "And that's not all that's been installed." The laser pointer turned off only for a small drill to extend from Matt's longest finger. "It's also applicable as a screwdriver and a corkscrew," said WARDEN.

Matt looked at it. "Ok...why that finger?" said Matt, only to hear Chip mutter something over the comm and his expression to somehow...fossilize.

"Also, there is another application that may be handy in a tight situation," said WARDEN. Matt's hand suddenly retracted into his arm before being replaced by a large hook.

Matt glared. "Ok...now you're taking the piss. I am not Captain Hook so I don't need this and what the hell is that piping noise?" said Matt, as a familiar voice could be heard getting louder, coinciding with a v-ripple heading for the shore.

"I don't suppose you've done too much research into the local dragons," said Chip, "Like how they have uncannily acute homing instincts."

"Oh no," said Matt, just as he heard a splash.

...

Chloe looked up as she heard a cut off scream that could only be her brother. Like the kids, she was also now cured, mostly thanks to her nanites. However she hadn't expected Astrid to be thrown into the cell next door. "So, what are you in here for?" she joked, trying to make light of the situation.

"Hiccup brought me here," said Astrid gloomily.

Chloe sighed and said, "I would have thought that if anyone had the

strength of will to overcome that artifact, it'd be him."

"That monster Circe's treating him like...a pet," said Astrid, bitterly.

"I can assure you, that's going to come back to bite her in a big way," said Chloe, "Maybe even literally."

"How? We're stuck in here," said Astrid, rattling the heavy iron bars for emphasis.

"Not for long," said Chloe, "If there's one thing I know about my brother, he'll go to any lengths to rescue his friends and me, typically with lots of explosions along the way."

...

Matt peered out the undergrowth, a new necklace of tooth marks around his neck where Steampipe had ambushed him. "I hate that sea serpent. Ok, we'll need to, against my better judgment, be quiet about this," he said, looking at Techo's shocked and worried expression. Matt and stealth rarely added up to anything good.

"So what would be the stealthiest approach?" asked Techo, not sure if he was going to get a good answer.

"We sneak in over the wall and avoid the guards...WHAT?" snapped Matt, as Techo facepalmed.

"Matt, maybe you should delegate the stealth-planning to someone else," suggested Chris.

"I can do this. How hard can it be? OH COME ON!" said Matt, snapping the last part as the group sighed again.

"Matt, you're really not showing much promise with be a 'stealth leader'," said Fishlegs.

"Oh, and I suppose you could do better?" snapped Matt.

"Well, the guards seem to be animals that have good night vision but could be easily blinded. If we time their patrols..." began Fishlegs only to stop as Matt said "Fine, fine, let's just go with plan E."

"E? We weren't even to be Plan N yet," said Tuffnut.

Matt stood up, held up a finger to the wind...and threw a plasma orb at the wall, blowing a large hole in it which Chris and co all ran at. "THAT'S plan E," said Matt.

"I thought 'explode' started with 'X'," said Ruffnut.

...

Circe sighed as the villa shook with an explosion and she activated a communication spell. "Captain, we appear to have visitors. Are the preparations complete?" she asked, stroking Hiccup's head absently.

"Yes, my lady. We shall be awaiting your visitors," said the captain.

Circe winced as she heard Hiccup's voice over the connection. It was an annoying side effect of the Atlantean control implant sown into the cloak which would hopefully fade when his first kill was complete and the human side was permanently removed.

"You are definitely in for it now," said Hiccup's voice, _"This time, my friends won't stop until your whole place is rubble."_

Circe grinned at that. "Is that a dragon's pride I sense?" she taunted in reply.

"That's a Viking's pride," said Hiccup, _"We're not exactly Berserkers, but we Hairy Hooligans give everything we've got in battle."_

"Hmm...well, soon you'll be gone and I'll have a nice dragon to protect me and gather test subjects," said Circe smugly.

"Even if I do become a full dragon, I won't submit that easily," said Hiccup.

"Oh, you will. That's the beauty of the cloak," said Circe with a sneer.

Hiccup growled and said, _"I'm at least going to do as much damage as I can. Like maybe hobble you."_

"Oh, you won't. Your dragon self is completely loyal," said Circe.

"You don't know much about dragons," growled Hiccup.

"Oh, I know all there is. Now I would like to listen to my PET!" said Circe, pouring on the pressure. Hiccup tried to resist, but he could feel the dragon instincts gaining strength. He had to hang on to who he really was and what really mattered. "Oh, you won't be able to hang on for long, child. Now go rip that female's throat out," said Circe, knowing that all the seal needed was a 'first kill'.

Hiccup tried to resist that command, tried to turn it around to use to his own advantage. All he could hear in his head was Circe's laugh as he helplessly walked out.

...

Circe's guards have experienced plenty of attempted attacks on Circe's villa. All of them have dealt with, some rather swiftly. However, this time, the invaders were a bit more...explosive. The guard captain kept his head down as several of his men were thrown over his cover by another explosion. "Where is that weapon?" he snapped, "It's supposed to be up and firing now!"

"We do not know how to get our lady's magic to work!" yelled a guard before a burst landed at his feet and he 'vanished'.

The captain cursed and snapped, "Is there anyone competent enough to

carry out our lady's orders?!"

Matt peered over his cover. "Peekaboo...I SEE YOU!" he yelled, lunging at him.

The captain, being a warthog, let out a porcine squeal before Matt started knocking him around.

Circe walked out to see what was sheer mayhem before sighing "If you want something done..." she muttered.

She was heading over to her weapon when she heard a distant boom. She looked up in confusion to see if the volcano had started erupting, but it hadn't yet. Then she heard the whooshing sound of something coming in very fast, soon followed by the sound of someone yelling "DARE TO BE STUPID!"

She looked up in time for a white blob to splat on her face, knocking her on her arse. Those who were fighting nearby at the time paused in bewildered amusement as Circe struggled to remove the white blob from her face, her muffled curses thankfully censored for the kids.

Matt broke the silence by attacking the nearest guards...only to be knocked on his back by Hiccup when he aimed a blast at Circe. "Hiccup, if you've managed to completely throw off Circe's control, lick your nose for yes," said Matt, not expecting anything like that.

Hiccup glared before roaring...a mistake with Matt who tossed a flashbang orb in his mouth. That ignited the gas pocket inside of him, causing Hiccup to briefly expand with a muffled boom and smoke to leak out of his orifices. He let out a weak growl that can easily be translated to mean 'Ow...'

Matt jumped back before Morph shot over his head and Circe yelled "ENOUGH!" pressing a device that caused a high pitched whine to echo out, causing everyone that heard it to slump down

...

At the ship, the other experiments were starting to get a little antsy. Morph's shooting himself out of the cannon to go help might not have been the brightest move, but it put them all on the thought going to help themselves.

"The explosions stopped ages ago. If he'd won, he'd be back by now," said Draco.

"Even if he is wrapping up with Circe, the volcano's countdown is ticking," said Chip.

"Maybe he'd be back by now if lizard lips had helped," said Contrinus, glaring at where Dania was apparently meditating in her natural form.

"Why should she have helped?" said Draco bitterly, "It's not like she owes Matt anything."

"I can hear you, construct," said Dania with her eyes still closed.

"Yeah, but are you actually listening?" snapped Draco.

"I am...I am not a soldier...the crew I was with were...and I saw exactly what she did to them," said Dania, calmly.

"Let me guess, she turned them into actual lizards," said Chip.

"No, she had her guards execute them," said Dania calmly.

"Oh, I had assumed that Daya was part of that crew," said Chip, less harshly.

"His grandfather was..." said Dania adding in splitter, "And if you tell him a thing of that, I will rip your still beating heart from your chest."

"Ok, I'm not even gonna bother to ask about the other two," said Draco hesitatingly.

"Unrelated," said Dania coldly

"Still, I think we could have gone to help against Circe," said Contrinus, "I mean, we have so many things she doesn't know about. We should have pressed our advantage."

Dania said, "I will not see these people killed."

"I'm not saying we should all attack at once. I mean, someone has to make sure that everybody's able to get to safety afterwards," said Contrinus, "But we should have had more people going with Matt than what he went with."

Dania sighed. "Is this a feeble attempt to get me to aid you?" she said.

"Well, we could do a musical guilt trip number, but Matt strictly forbids it," said Draco.

"Attempts at doing musical numbers, particularly those specifically meant to invoke certain emotions, are punishable by keelhauling while in orbit and having to clean the entire ventilation system with your own toothbrush," said Chip.

Dania raised an eye ridge at that before she said, "No...I will not."

"Fine, but you're not stopping us from going," snapped Contrinus.

Dania nodded, hearing them leave before she heard someone say "Isss it true?"

A human would most likely have jumped in surprise, but splitters are virtually mass-produced with stoicism. "How long have you been listening?" asked Dania.

Daya slithered out, "Long enough. Why aren't we helping them?"

"An entire Imperial attack squad attempted to destroy that witch,"

said Dania, "Only a small handful survived to be experimented on. No one can do better."

"This island will be destroyed and usss with it anyway," said Daya, sitting down next to her.

"Then it would be more prudent to have just left while we had as much of the crew as we can," said Dania, "The needs of the many outweighs the needs of the few."

"We cannot just leave them," said Daya desperately.

"Helping will only lead to more tragedy," said Dania, "They are giving their lives so that we may escape. Can we let that sacrifice be in vain?"

"If we don't help, we're letting theirsss be," said Daya.

"We have not enough resources to deal with Circe," said Dania sternly, "It has been proved that it would take an organized army to defeat her. We have only a ragtag collection of inexperienced would-be soldiers."

"It'sss better than running. You alwaysss told me ssstoriesss of how your people were honorable. What'sss honorable about thisss?" said Daya, standing up to leave.

"Honor without survival amounts to nothing," said Dania.

"Then I choosse that. At leassst I'll be able to live with that. I'm going to help Draco and his friendsss ressscue their friend," said Daya, bitterly.

"All you'll be doing is getting yourself killed as well," said Dania desperately.

"I don't care..." said Daya walking away, leaving Dania to stare helplessly.

...

"I never thought I'd walk back to this tomb," Dania muttered, walking towards what looked like a cave in a hillock. She was the only one who knew about this place. Everyone else had died and she didn't want to give the villagers false hope.

"System rebooted. Welcome, Medical Officer Dania. It has been 432 solar orbits since your last visit. I trust you are well," said a disembodied voice as the lights turned on.

"I...have been recovering," said Dania, referring more to her physical wounds than her emotional ones.

"I apologies but I have been unable to contact imperial command and scans indicate that no ships have entered this verse," said the computer sadly.

"I haven't been expecting any," said Dania.

"What are your orders, ma'am?" said the computer, Dania sighing

before asking "Is my old gear still in working order?"

"I have been repaired your armor completely since you last removed it. Your weapons may need recalibration," said the computer.

"That'll do," said Dania.

...

The experiments and the few villagers that had followed peered out from the jungle at the villa to see several unconscious mercs being dragged away. "Told you it went wrong," Draco said.

"I would have thought that Matt would have had a lot more success," said Chip.

"You don't think Morph fubared the plan, do you?" asked Draco.

"No, Morph may be dim, but he couldn't screw up this epically. Maybe that did. That looks like something from Avalar," said Contrinus, pointing to a crystal spire on the roof.

Chip studied the crystal and said, "That looks like a sonic stun crystal. The Avalarians use them to incapacitate invaders. Where did she get one?"

"The same place they got those?" said Wilson, who had remained at the ship when the others had gone, pointing out several guards with Atlantean staff blasters

"Wow, the Atlanteans were really terrible at picking up after themselves," said Chip.

"Look, we gotta get in there but we're dead if we try anything. We'd need an army," said Wilson grimly.

"You're starting to sound like Dania," said Contrinus in an annoyed tone.

"I don't like this anymore then you guys. I'd still be some bug's lackey if it wasn't for the boss," snapped Wilson

"Which is why we need to rescue him and the others," said Chip, "If only we had a sonic pitch emitter. If we set it to the right frequency, we can shatter their crystal weapons and deprive them of a great advantage."

"I have something better," said a metallic voice behind them.

The group turned around in surprise to see an armored-up splitter. Given there were only two known splitters on this planet and this one being far too small and slender to be Xander, it was easy though astonish to guess who it was. "Dania?" asked Contrinus.

"What? You think they let civilian doctors on imperial cutters?" said Dania before several shots were heard, a trio of guards running forward.

"Halt, golem!" one of them snapped.

"I'm not a golem, I'm a cyborg," said Chip with irritation.

Dania said, "Am I right in saying you aren't going to surrender?" to the guards. The guards snarled before powering up their staffs. "Fine," said Dania, a multi-barreled blaster on her shoulder opening up on them. The rounds quickly tore through the guards, whose armor were of a decidedly more basic quality. "CHARGE!" she called, the experiments and Daya staring in shock as the villagers charged out, following her forward.

Daya finally grinned and said "That'sss my grandma, that isss."

Draco stared between Daya and the charging Dania before faintly muttering, "How could I have missed the similarity?"

...

Circe watched as Matt and Astrid were both dragged in. "The pieces of the puzzle are finally falling to place," said Circe before turning to the guards and said, "If he tries to sing again, tranquilize him." Matt just smirked as Circe peered at him. "You are an unusual one: a mind like a hurricane, no order at all," she said.

"That's nothing, you haven't met the other residents yet," said Matt.

"It doesn't matter. I will break you like all the others. Now then, as for you, my dear, you seem to have something in your future protecting you from me, but will it protect you from him?" said Circe, smugly, looking over at Hiccup.

"You don't know much about dragons," said Astrid, "They don't like the taste of humans. They almost totally eat fish."

"Your dragons, yes. The cloak is its own type. And with my addition, it will kill what I wish it too," said Circe.

"Killing anyone, especially his friends, is completely against Hiccup's nature," said Astrid, "There's no way your cloak can make him bend that far."

"Really? Pet, blast the other one," said Circe, pointing at Matt who went "Wait, what?" Hiccup glanced at Matt before shooting a plasma blast at him. Astrid stared in horror as Matt was knocked flying and lay still.

"It's almost a shame," said Circe, "I wanted to unravel how the Shar-Khan physiology worked. Oh well, I suppose dissection can reveal most of it. His sister will have to provide the rest."

Astrid just stared in horror at Hiccup before Circe said "As you can see, he does what I want. Your friend is gone. Guards, take her and that...meat back to the cells."

"Mistress, aren't you going to feed her to the dragon now?" asked a guard.

"No, I think she needs time to think on how she could have avoided

this," said Circe. The guard shrugged before unshackling Astrid, who was too numb to put up a fight.

...

Chloe glared, looking at Toothless who was also returning the glare. "Oh for god's sake, grow up," snapped Techo at both of them. Toothless glared at Techo and growled.

â€|

Kala sighed from where she was shackled. _"Look, blaming them won't help,"_ she said, looking to the other dragons for a little support

"If they hadn't taken us here in the first place, we wouldn't be in this mess," growled Toothless.

"And if we didn't come, Hiccup would probably be dead by now," retorted Kala.

Toothless snapped, _"HE MIGHT AS WELL BE! THAT MONSTER UPSTAIRS IS DESTROYING HIM!"_

"Wait, that other Night Fury is Hiccup?" asked Barf.

The other dragons stared at the Zippleback. _"Weren't you paying attention?"_ asked Stormfly.

"I kinda thought he was Toothless's older brother and has been fighting over Kala to be his mate," said Belch.

Kala glared. _"You didn't say that cause if you had, I'd have vaporized you,"_ she said calmly.

"How can a two-headed dragon be so lacking in observation skills?" asked Hookfang.

"With ease," said Kala darkly before the door opened and the guards came in, dragging Matt and escorting Astrid. If Toothless had been in a bad mood before, that soon paled to a sunny disposition compared to when Kala started battering at the bars and screaming death threats. The other dragons stared as Kala screamed several unknown words that would no doubt be painful to Circe and for some reason, a broom handle before she calmed down

"Geeze, I never heard a threat like that," said Hookfang. Apparently the humans felt the same way as they had backed as far as they could from the dragons' cell.

Chloe however was sighing before Matt suddenly shot upright. "Starflame, I have a big enough headache already. Can you please not roar so loud?"

Starflame/Kala immediately tried to pull forward to kick Matt. Since she couldn't really reach him, Chloe unknowingly obliged by punching Matt in the face.

"I hate everything," groaned Matt before an explosion was heard.

Chloe temporarily ignored the explosion before saying, "Did you have to scare us like that?"

"Hey, I needed to play dead," said Matt, "Guards tend to let their guards down when they think they're only guarding a corpse."

Astrid however said weakly "You were hit by a Night Fury fireball. I saw Hiccup..." only for Matt to say "Plasma blasts just tickle me."

"It's true," said Chloe, "Me, Matt, and Kala have different elements we can manipulate and can't be hurt by. Matt's is plasma, mine's electricity, and Kala's fire."

Matt nodded sadly before another explosion was heard. "SOME PEOPLE HAVE HEADACHES!" he yelled

"Look on the bright side," said Chloe, "That almost assuredly means someone's coming to rescue us." Matt shrugged before looking at the window.

...

"MEEGA NALA QUEESTAAA!" called Draco, diving into a melee.

"Everybody, stay together!" called Dania, firing several blasts into the attackers.

"Allied psy signals detected, ma'am. Highlighting separating wall," said the ARX's comp in her ear.

"You may wish to stand back," said Dania.

Draco gave Dania an annoyed look and said, "Hey, do I undermine your orders?" Draco didn't bother to move...and as such was blasted onto his back as a sonic cannon demolished the wall down to the cells.

Morph looked up and said, "Hi guys. I was wondering what was taking you so long."

"What?" called Draco, deafened by the blast before a whistling noise was heard and a blue blast hit Morph.

The dragons were already busting the rest of the way through. Most of the work had already been done by the blast, but the bars needed to be bended out of the way. Matt was first out to see Hiccup circling. "Move it, let's go!" he called.

Morph was already back together. "Is it time for me to be stuffed down someone's throat now?" he asked.

"Yes..." said Matt, muttering a memo to apologize to Hiccup and throwing Morph at Hiccup. Somewhat fortunately, Matt hadn't informed Hiccup of Morph's anti-digestion ability and thus he was a little horrified when the dragon part of him snapped up and swallowed Morph without a second thought.

Matt was waiting for it to take effect when a blast knocked him on his front. Matt looked up to see the captain of the guards standing over him. "Ah, Mr. Pig, we meet again," he said.

"You won't win. We are leaving this island with our mistress," snapped the guard before jumping back as Matt lunged at him. Meanwhile, Hiccup had started to fly a little unsteadily as his stomach sent urgent signals to his brain.

"First off, nobody, and I mean NOBODY, jacks my ride," said Matt, "Second, what makes you think your boss is gonna drag a bunch of dead weight losers like you guys?"

"She promised!" snapped the guard before being floored by a punch.

"You ought to have learned by now how much her word is worth," said Matt.

The guard didn't even bother to get up before Morph landed on his head, followed by a dazed Hiccup. "Hey Matt, look what I found in there," said Morph, holding up a lynch pin.

Matt looked at the pin. "What the hell?" he asked before they looked over at Hiccup and the sparking amulet. "Hey Morph, you see that sparkly jewel thingy on that dragon's throat?" asked Matt.

"The one that's fastened to the spot on the other side of the throat where I found that lynch pin fastened?" asked Morph. The others looked as with a small 'clank' the amulet fell off.

Astrid blinked and said, "No way it was that easy."

"Well, at least we didn't have to go through the entire 'fighting the enemy within' thing again," said Matt.

Dania said, "No...he still needs to fight his way out."

"Should be a lot easier without Circe harping in his head now," said Matt.

Hiccup twitched at that and tail whipped Matt flying before lunging at Astrid. "I think his dragon side's still hungry," said Morph.

Astrid was staring as Hiccup growled. "Hiccup, you're free of that thing," she said.

Hiccup snarled and tried to snap down on her, but his jaw was kept from closing by a large metal hook. "Time to check for cavities," said Matt before turning to Morph and saying, "Remove this from your memory or I will use you for deep-sea bait."

"Remove what?" asked Morph, his familiar wall-eyed expression of obliviousness on his face.

Matt shrugged before flipping back and forcing Hiccup back. "Ok...time to snap out of it," he said, struggling. Hiccup wriggled like a catfish, but Matt had the advantage of leverage, for the moment anyways. "HICCUP! SNAP OUT OF IT!" yelled Matt, before being

finally thrown off.

Astrid took the initiative and tackled Hiccup herself. She didn't have as much mass as Fishlegs, but Hiccup was still in an awkward upright position. Hiccup tried to pull free as Matt said, "Ok...hold him steady. I need a good aim for this."

"Okeydokey," said Morph before morphing into a large octopus-like experiment and wrapping Hiccup tightly in his tentacles.

"MORPH! BAD EXPERIMENT!" screamed Matt.

Morph blinked before shifting into a sheep-like experiment. Matt quickly covered his ears before he bleated. Hiccup twitched before falling asleep...along with everyone else bar Matt, Chloe, and Dania. "You'd think my team would have learnt by now," said Matt conversationally.

Dania glanced around and said, "Sleep inducement, effective. Though I feel that this hasn't won us the entire battle."

"No...let's go kill Circe," said Matt.

...

Circe sighed as her remaining guard aimed at the doors. She was especially furious as, not only had her control been ended but all she could hear was snoring along it. And even more frustrating, the sonic stun crystal had been destroyed so she couldn't rely on that.

On cue, the main doors exploded outwards, a hail of ion fire cutting down her guards. "Circe...for crimes against the imperial splitter emperor, I am here to arrest you," yelled a metallic voice before a splitter exo-suit stomped in with the two Atlanteans.

"And in the event the empire doesn't respond, or at least the right empire, we'll taking care of you ourselves," said Matt.

Circe, despite everything wasn't worried. "Dania...such a pleasure. You never visit, you never write," she taunted.

"Nothing to write on," said Dania dryly, "And I've seen the way you treat visitors."

"Very good...shall we get this over with? That volcano is due to explode soon," she said.

Matt shrugged "Fine by me." before the trio opened fire.

However, Circe's personal defense shield was still in affect and none of their shots hit. "Now it's my turn," said Circe before sending a blue fireball out at each of them.

Matt and Chloe were sent flying while Dania continued firing. "Not again...NOT AGAIN!" she snapped.

"My, you are a tough old reptile, aren't you?" said Circe before sending a blast into the floor, causing a shockwave to ripple out. The ground immediately gave way underneath Dania's mech, trapping her

up to the waist. "Too easy. Now it's time to put you three out of my misery," she said before she had to step back as an axe hummed past her face.

She glanced at Astrid who raised up her axe again. "You come anywhere near them and I'll chop you apart," said Astrid.

Circe smirked as she sensed Hiccup coming round and his conditioning still trying to obey the last command...to catch a meal. "I don't think you will have the chance," she said calmly.

"I notice your shield thing doesn't stop my axe," said Astrid as she prepared to swing, "I guess you've never actually been in a real fight before."

Circe looked at Astrid before sighing and waving a hand, causing Astrid to be pinned against the wall. "Now then, my dear," she said with a smirk as Hiccup staggered in, Circe waving a hand and the door resealing just as Matt's team and some rebels ran into view. "Pet, it's time for you to carry out your orders," said Circe, "Make a meal of this girl and be quick about it."

Hiccup turned to look at Astrid before back at Circe, several whomphs heard as the rebels outside apparently got the other dragons to try and aid in blasting the door down. "You've been delaying this long," said Circe, "Finish her off now."

Hiccup whined at that, the eye color flickering, just as Circe could sense the magi field from the cloak starting to flicker. Circe tried to exert more control over Hiccup as she said, "Do not hesitate, pet, my commands are all that matter to you." Hiccup didn't seem to be listening just as the door gave way.

...

Kala and Toothless were first through at that, hearing Hiccup saying, _"You...you used me..."_ The two of them paused at that. It sounded very promising, but they didn't want to jinx it.

Circe snapped, "YOU ARE MINE! DO AS I SAY!"

Hiccup shook his head at that before growling, _"No...I won't let you hurt my friends..."_

"Shall we get her now?" asked Toothless.

"Nah, let him get the first shot. He deserves it most," said Kala.

Circe glared, her eyes glowing before she snapped, "You dare...YOU DARE DISOBEY!"

Hiccup snarled before snapping, _"I don't obey you anymore!"_ The words probably didn't cross the language barrier, but the fire shot he punctuated them with most certainly did.

Circe was knocked flying into the far wall, causing Astrid to drop. Matt, up on his feet noticed the other dragons and yelled "GET HER!"

The dragons quickly opened fire upon Circe, but her shielding deflected the flames. Circe smirked and said, "You pitiful creatures. There is no fire, in pure form or incased in metal, that can pass through my..." Suddenly, a shrill whistling was heard, almost like that of a steam locomotive. Matt screamed at that and ran away

The others looked puzzled at that before looking up and seeing Steampipe flying down for a landing. They quickly scattered to get away from the large dragon before he landed with a slight squelching sound due to his heavy belly. Steampipe looked around, wondering where his little screaming buddy was.

Circe stared before snapping "BEGONE, FOUL SERPENT!" Steampipe gave Circe an annoyed look. "I am the mistress of this island and I command you to-" started Circe but she was cut off when Steampipe spat out a torrent of water that completely covered her.

Everyone stared for a minute before the randomness of the past 5 seconds caused them to laugh, be they human or dragon. Circe was certainly less impressive now, her hair and robes all soggy and hanging limply from her. She glared at the group and snapped, "You dare make a mockery of me?!" She prepared to blast them with a fireball, but the spell couldn't ignite in her damp fingers.

Matt grinned at that, strolling forward. "Did someone blow a fuse?" he said, glaring at Steampipe who sensed that his chew toy wanted to do some business before they played before Matt peered past her to see another mauve cloak. "You made another?" he said.

Circe glared at Matt and said, "I don't have to answer of your questions."

"Then...let see how you look in it," said Matt in a different, more psychotic tone with red eyes before grabbing her by the throat and throwing her back. Circe was dazed by her head hitting the wall and was only beginning to regain her senses when she felt leather creeping up her arms.

'Matt' waved. "Enjoy the volcano," he said before blasting the doorway and collapsing it

...

Astrid kept talking to Hiccup, making doubly sure that he won't slip back into his feral mindset. Fortunately, Hiccup was able to talk back, showing he was recovering.

"This feels weird," Hiccup said, a little confused before they jumped as Matt blasted the doorframe, burying Circe, though he now smelled off to Hiccup now...more threatening. His crazy happy tone wasn't helping.

"Ok, job's done. Let's leave before we get an express delivery of molten rock," he said happily, clapping his hands together.

"We're just going to leave her there?" asked Astrid, a little appalled by the idea.

'Matt' laughed at that. "Who cares? Let her roast," he said cheerfully before twitching.

Dania glanced at Matt and said, "While I do not carry his...enthusiasm, he does have a point. That witch deserves to burn."

A shaking was heard before WARDEN said, "All personnel. Evacuate...seismics detect an explosion is imminent."

"No more time for talking," said Chloe, "Time to go."

...

The volcano had already turned the sky black, what looked like snow falling down. "Go, go, go! We are leaving!" yelled a trooper on the cargo ramp.

Everyone scrambled to get onboard. However, there was a bit of congestion when the dragons started boarding. Matt glared at Steampipe. "Sod off, you overgrown water pistol!" he snapped. Steampipe gave him an offended look and tried to waddle up the ramp, though it was clear he wouldn't fit inside. "NO! You'll be safe underwater so get back out!" snapped Matt. Steampipe gave a look that probably could be interpreted as 'Why didn't I think of that?' The large water dragon quickly started waddling to the beach.

"Take off, go, go, go!" said Matt as a deafening bang was heard and a black cloud was seen engulfing the far island where the volcano was. A wave of volcanic ash started pouring down the mountainside. Matt had seen enough natural disaster films to know that the ash was more than enough to kill them all. "WARDEEEEN!" he yelled as the hatch closed.

...

The pyroclastic blast had all the results of a nuclear blast, shredding the islands and anything left on them: the cutter, the Bladestorm wreck, Circe's villa...but not before a winged shape burst forth and headed off in pursuit of the fleeing ship.

...

The ship shook like it was in an earthquake as the border of the pyroclastic blast caught it. Anyone who wasn't buckled was tossed around, namely the dragons in the cargo.

After a minute the shaking stopped. Matt stood up first, "Ah...that was easy. WARDEN, take us home."

"That is not recommendable at this period of time," said WARDEN.

"I don't care...but take the scenic route. We dunno when that dumb cloak will fall off," said Matt before walking out.

...

While Hiccup was glad to have escaped the island, he wasn't happy that he still wasn't human yet.

"Do not worry, Mr. Haddock. My scans indicate that the cloaks unbonding. It should come off within 12 hours and the remaining side

effects should mostly stop within 48," said Dania kindly.

"What other side effects?" asked Hiccup.

"You'll have temporary abilities similar to what we noted as the Shar-Khan from ancient records: simple transformative abilities. That will be gone in a day or two. Others may include lingual skills," said Dania calmly.

"You mean I can talk to dragons?" asked Toothless.

"For a while, Hiccup." said Dania, adding, "It may even be permanent."

"Well, I suppose that wouldn't be too bad," said Hiccup.

"True...I..." began Dania before a loud bang was heard.

Hiccup looked up and asked, "What was that?"

"Alert...hostile aerial unit," said WARDEN.

"With our luck, it's probably a wild dragon that's territorial," said Hiccup.

Dania said grimly, "Really? And where was it nesting? The island just exploded."

"And Circe probably would have known if there was a dragon nesting..." said Hiccup before remembering what Matt did before they left, "You don't think..."

Dania swore, "That idiotic..." before the rear hatch shrieked...and was torn off, a mauve dragon peering inside and snarling "You."

Dania quickly grabbed onto a safety bar on the wall as the air pressure threatened to suck her out. Hiccup had to dig his claws in to keep from being sucked out and he definitely didn't want to be anywhere near this dragon.

Astrid however wasn't so lucky, the amused dragon snatching her and holding her up. "Oh, I'm going to enjoy the consolation prize," she said before roaring in pain as several red blasts burnt into her side, a security turret and several spiderbots on the hill firing at her.

The dragon snarled before jumping back out of the ship, Astrid still in her grip. "Astrid!" yelled Hiccup before running forward and jumping out.

...

Matt winced as the ship shook again, their attacker flying in front. "Lock on with pulse cannons, knock her...belay that!" he snapped, spotting the hostage and heading over to the airlock with a sigh. The ash from the blast had reached even this far and was blocking the sun outside. "I hate bad weather; clouds, ash, killer dragons," he muttered.

There was a loud rumble of thunder outside before WARDEN said, "Electrical charge detected within clouds, voltage at 2000 and rising."

"Well, I get electrocuted anyway," Matt muttered, opening the airlock and letting the air suck him out.

...

The dragoness looked down at Astrid and said in Circe's voice, "You...you did this. I could have escaped. I could have been FREE!"

Astrid stared and said, "But you were still in that room. The lava should have buried you."

Circe smirked. "I am Asgardian...and now dragon too thanks to you," she said.

"You brought your own misfortunes on yourself," said Astrid, "If you had actually treated people like people, you wouldn't had ended up like this."

"You little humans. I don't care what the Allfather said. You were supposed to aid us!" snapped Circe before a blue blast and a larger plasma blast hit her.

Circe roared before turning to see Matt and Hiccup. "Hand over the girl and I'll only give you only half the tanning you deserve," called Matt.

Circe smirked as Hiccup came into an unsteady hover as well. "Oh, my dear ex-pet," she taunted before looking at Astrid. "You want her? Catch," she said letting go and causing Hiccup to dive while Matt snapped and flew at Circe.

He breathed a wave of plasma breath at her which she avoided by rising higher into the air. "You will perish!" she roared, spitting a much larger blast that sent Matt pinwheeling back.

Just then, she heard a loud humming in the air. She looked up to see the North Star focusing its cannons on her. "Oh no," she muttered before taking several pulse blasts into her chest, knocking her into the ash below.

Matt landed on the top of the ship like the figurehead from hell and coughed, "Game over. Thanks for playing."

...

However, Hiccup was still in the game. More specifically, he was still diving to catch Astrid. He was closing in on her, but he wasn't sure how deep the cloud was or how close to the ocean they were. After what seemed like an eternity, he finally managed to get beside her, nudging her so she landed on his back before beginning to pull up. However the problem was that the cloud had cleared and the ocean was now in sight...and getting closer.

He flapped his wings desperately, trying to remember what Toothless

does in a situation like this. Finally his wings billowed back and his descent slowed, his feet skimming the water before he pulled up...just in time for something large, smoking to slam into the ocean behind him.

Astrid looked back and asked, "Was that Circe?"

"Hope so, I'm not sure if I could carry Matt back," said Hiccup.

...

It was a day later and Hiccup finally looked mostly human, apart from his eyes and suspiciously sharp teeth, though Dania said that those would clear up soon. Starflame for some reason had, after hearing Dania say that the language barrier would only work on some dragons, had spent some time trying to say something before spending the rest bashing her head on the floor.

However, the dragon-speaking ability was more limited than they had thought because while Hiccup could speak with Toothless and Kala before, he couldn't remember what they had said because he could only remember them speaking the dragon tongue.

"It was cool while it lasted, boy," said Hiccup, Toothless purring as Hiccup scratched him behind the ear. The ship's golem 'spiderbots' had repaired the hatch incredibly fast, allowing the kids to sit with their dragons though a few indigenous ones seemed to have sneaked aboard.

Hiccup was also taking the time to write a letter for one of the Terrible Terrors to carry back to Berk. He was careful to exclude...well, pretty much everything. He basically wrote that he was fine, but they had to stay in warmer climates for a while for the sake of his health.

They had almost found that out the hard way when he had collapsed shivering as soon as they had passed the north of somewhere the gang had called Italy. Luckily they had turned around quickly enough. For some reason the gang had been happy, Draco yelling something about 'holiday'. The plan was to cruise along something called the 'equator'. Hiccup wasn't sure what that mean, but it was definitely warmer than it ever got on Berk.

"Well...at least we get to go where no Vikings gone before," he said, absently to the Terrible Terror who shrugged and said "I don't care...too much eels." The dragon-talking power had its downsides, apparently since the Terrible Terrors were the easiest to talk to and they typically didn't have good conversation.

...

The volcano had turned into a smoking, or in the sea's case, a boiling area. Nothing could survive...

A claw burst out of the sea and a humanoid figure pulled herself onto a piece of debris that was floating. Circe coughed weakly before fumbling for the clasp on her neck. "No...NO!" she said desperately, pulling her hand back to see scaled claws.

The clasp was gone. At least part of it was gone. There was probably more of it under her skin, but the rest had been broken off, by breaking out of the villa or from the ship's cannon, she didn't know.

"No...NO...THAT...MORTAL!" roared Circe, shaking her fist skyward before she stopped. She would be patient...as she had always been. She would find that girl, take everything she loved, and then...maybe, she'd kill her.

* * *

><p>There's another chapter. We're taking a brief trek through Greek mythology, namely a certain part of the Odyssey. Of course, there are a few twists, such as references to the Atlanteans and the Asgardians. And by Asgardians, I think you might be able to guess the tech-savvy versions I'm referring to.<p>

Anyways, the next chapter will also be borrowing from another culture's mythology. From which culture? The only clue you'll get is that they're far, far away from the Norselands and are radically different from them. Tune in next week to see what happens and please review.

8. Blood Plasma

****Voyagers Saga****

****Broken Nest****

****Chapter 8: Blood Plasma****

The Bladestorm was cruising along the equator. After an attempt to cross the Alps that caused Hiccup to go into thermal shock, it was decided that they stick to warmer climates until all the cold blood was out of Hiccup's systems.

"She was a sneaky bitch, I'll give her that," said Techo, looking at the readings from the medical bay taken when Hiccup had first passed out.

"Probably added that little safeguard to make sure Hiccup wouldn't try to fly home," said Chloe.

Techo nodded. "Just as well it'll wear off in a couple of days," he said before a beeping got his attention. "Hello...WARDEN, you picking this up?" he said.

"Yes, I've been monitoring and verifying for the last 10 minutes," said WARDEN.

"What is it?" asked Chloe, looking at an image of what looked like a green cloud.

"Rift energy. A rip engine was activated some time ago. You are looking at the energy that was originally put out by the burst," said WARDEN.

"Do we know how long ago that was?" asked Chloe.

"A few hundred years from the decay," said WARDEN, calmly.

"Hmm, might be worth investigating," said Techo.

"Investigate what? There's nothing over there," said Chloe, "It's like stopping to look at 20 year old skid marks."

...

Meanwhile, the kids and their dragons now had something in common...cabin fever. _"If I don't get out of this tin can I cannot be responsible for my actions,_" said Kala in a shaking voice, the other dragons keeping their distance except for Hookfang who was wondering why he was now missing a tooth.

"Maybe we can try to tell the guys to let us stretch our wings for a bit," said Stormfly.

Toothless nodded. _"Maybe...I don't want to be near her if she flips out again,_" he said weakly.

"If only we can get those little buggers to carry a proper message," said Meatlug quietly. The dragons stopped as they remembered how the Terrible Terrors refused to go near Kala now after their failed attempt to tell Hiccup Kala's name.

"Uh...maybe the kids will figure out we need some outdoor time on their own," said Toothless.

"I hope so..." said Stormfly weakly as Kala started gnawing on the barrel of one of the tanks.

...

Quite fortunately, Hiccup was talking to Matt about that subject. "I mean, flying in a ship from the future is cool, but I think we all need some time to get out and stretch," said Hiccup.

Matt was watching the feed of Starflame gnawing on a MAKO with horror. "Yeah," he said absently.

"I mean, we're close enough to land, aren't we? We could just take the dragons to fly for a while," said Hiccup.

"We'll land first. WARDEN says the ship still needs repairs from the volcano blast," said Matt.

"Ok, I'm pretty sure everyone will be anxious to walk about," said Hiccup.

"Ok...helm, head for the coast," said Matt, walking over to point out a coastline rapidly approaching. "Welcome to America," he said cheerfully

"Hah, we beat Leif Erikson here! In your face, history!" said Morph.

Matt glared and made a patting motion, causing Morph to glow and flatten. "NO SPOILERS!" snapped Matt.

...

"Draco, bushi bu. At least we're somewhere warmer," said Contrinus, the two sitting on the beach that the North Star had landed near.

"I know, but I still can't help but think about how easily Circe had us pegged. I mean, aren't we prepared supposed to be prepared for anything?" asked Draco.

"We're supposed to be prepared?" said Contrinus, nudging Draco with a friendly grin.

Draco, however, wasn't in the mood. "Circe had us all against the wall and we just narrowly slipped out. I don't think we've had a closer call," said Draco.

"What about that time NegaMorph snapped and put a repeated loop of Matt's singing on the ship intercom?" said Contrinus, shuddering.

Draco groaned and said, "I had to have my ears cleaned out twice."

"Well, we're in America before the Americans. We have good weather and no psychopathic Asgardians..." said Contrinus, happily before they both heard a happy whistling and a cut off scream and splash.

"Instead, we have an obsessive-compulsive sea dragon," said Draco dryly. There was a 'ptui' and a column of sand went off next to them, Matt out cold in the new crater. Draco shrugged and said, "Well, as long as we're on the beach..." He walked over and started shoveling sand over Matt.

...

Kala was just as happy, lying down on the warm sand with a content expression. _"This is the life. Sun, sea, sand and no psychopaths...that aren't on our team,"_ she said happily. Morph was nearby making a sand castle. He was about almost done when the spiderbots came over with a small battering ram and tiny siege ladders. _"Case in point,"_ said Kala gloomily.

"Hey, you guys can't wreck my castle, that's the dragon's job," said Morph before scratching his head and asking, "How am I supposed to get a dragon to wreck it?" Kala glared and spat a plasma orb at him. "Thanks Kala," he called.

"Whatever..." grumbled Kala before realizing what he said and snapping, _"YOU KNOW WHO I AM?!"_

Morph said, "Aw...nice dragons don't growl." before vanishing as Kala snapped and blasted him.

"Figures, the one time Morph actually remembers and Matt is..." Kala paused and looked around, _"Hey, where is he?"_

Toothless pointed an ear flap at where Matt's hair was visible under a pile of sand, a straw, whose other end was clearly and hopefully in

his mouth, acting as an air hole while Draco and Contrinus continued adding more.

NegaMorph walked over to them and asked, "Are you guys burying Matt in the sand?"

"Yep," said Contrinus.

"Hold on a sec," said NegaMorph before walking away. He came back with a large flat stone and stuck in the sand a little further away. On it, it read, "Here lies Matthew Lynch. DIP."

Kala sighed at that. _"A day in the life of a mercenary,"_ she said before suddenly stopping as she sensed something. _"You smell that?"_ she asked.

Toothless sniffed before saying, _"I'm assuming you don't mean those little meat things those guys are attempting to cook. What are they called again?"_

"Hot dogs."

"But they don't look or smell like dogs."

"It's another name for sausages, but that's not important right now."

Toothless sniffed the air again and tensed. Blood.

"Looks like our day at the beach is about to come to an end," said Kala.

Everyone looked over as a line of men walked out of the treeline with the air of people presuming they have a certain win on their hands. "Uh oh," said Wilson under his breath, waving to the others to get their attention.

As they got closer, the mercs could easily see that these people were Aztecs, judging by their outfits and bladed clubs. Or at least some other Latin American indigenous culture who were just as unfriendly and bloodthirsty.

"Boss?" called Techo before jumping back as a small dune he had been standing on fountained up to reveal a dazed Matt.

"Is there a party going on?" asked Matt in a dazed tone before one of the Aztec warriors suddenly prodded him with his spear. "That's one," he said under his breath before saying "Can I help you?" before looking down to see the warning symbol that indicated the translators were waiting for the other guys to say something so they could translate.

However, the Aztecs didn't appear to be in a talkative mood, mostly glaring and holding up their weapons. "So...where'd you get those jaguar skins?" asked Matt. The warrior with the spear poked him again at that, causing Matt's grin to freeze before he said, "That's two. Say something you walking fur coat."

The Aztec said something that mostly translated into something uncivil before poking Matt hard again. Matt twitched at that before

his grin got wider and he delivered a right hook to the surprised warrior before rugby tackling his pal. The others simply watched as Matt started beating the crap out of the second warrior before the others decided to charge. By then, the others had their weapons drawn. Though it seemed a bit overkill when they were dealing with spears and clubs.

However, just before the first shot could be fired, Draco finally got up into their view. The reaction was impressive as the warriors stopped in place, dropped their gear and immediately started groveling. Draco glanced around before asking, "Are we on a game show or something?"

"No, we're under attack and Matt's causing an incident again...poked three times," said Chloe, not taking her eyes off the warriors before she said, "They seem to like you."

"Well, what's not to like?" said Draco, causing a collective eye roll.

One of the warriors pointed at Draco, gibbering something before pointing angrily at Matt and making chopping motions.

Draco scratched his head before asking, "Anyone else get that?"

"I'm just guessing right now, but I think they want permission to chop up Matt," said Chip.

The experiments paused for a minute before Chloe snapped "GUYS! Tell them to lay off. Look," she said before heading over, "We didn't want to say this near the kids but Circe damaged the nanoforge. We're low on food. We'll need to trade some. Get em to take us to their settlement."

Draco shrugged before saying loudly, "Take me to your leader!"

Everyone groaned at that, even the warriors before their leader said, "Follow us, lord."

"Lord, I like the sound of that," said Draco.

"Why do I have a feeling this day is going to be full of nauseating ego overinflating?" asked Chip.

...

Matt had gotten the majority of the crew to remain at the ship while they went. "So...what's your capitol?" asked Matt, only to get a glare and Matt to grumble and say "Draco."

Draco didn't have to walk. He was being carried on a hastily-constructed litter that the Aztecs were carrying on their shoulders. He was definitely enjoying himself, to the increasing annoyance of others. However, Draco was willing to convey questions, if only because he was curious about them too. "Loyal subjects, you have not yet told us the name of your capitol city, which you are doubtlessly taking us to," he said in a regal manner.

"Surely you jest. Every city has heard of El Dorado," said one of the

guards before looking around as, as a partial latent psychic, he appeared to hear half a dozen 'cha-ching' noises.

However, the dragon riders, whose knowledge about mythology was primarily centered on Norse, didn't quite get the reference. "What's so great about El Dorado?" whispered Hiccup to Matt.

"It's a city made of gold," said Matt excitedly.

The same guard glanced around again, swearing that he heard something similar to the 'cha-ching' noise.

"All we need is 300 gallons of chloroform and an earthmover and we're RICH!" said Matt before looking innocent as every one of the guards looked at him confused. "Uh...I mean...ooh, look, it's Chupy!" said Matt suddenly pointing.

The others looked and watched in horror as the wild chupacabra tackled Matt into the bushes before, to equal shock, they looked to see the two wrestling. "Huh, so this is the world that Chupy originally came from," said Chip, "I was wondering if we'd ever come across it one day."

"GET HIM OFF MEEEE!" screamed Matt.

Chloe sighed and said, "Alright." She grabbed the chupacabra and pulled, saying, "Let go of him before you get kr'ta poisoning." The chupacabra looked at Chloe before shrugging and attacking her instead.

Chip sighed and muttered, "This will take a while."

...

After the chupacabra had been chased off successfully, the gang had continued until they had reached a rise leading down into a large valley. The mercs didn't need to know what the yellow glow was as their money meters were already exploding.

Chip was also doing some scanning. "The metal deposits in this valley are phenomenal. There's some iron, tin, and copper here, but more precious metals like platinum, rhodium, silver, and..."

"GOLD!" snapped Matt with a manic look before coughing to calm himself.

"Indeed," said Chip, "There are even a few spots that look very positive for precious stone deposits. This all seems rather odd. This shouldn't be geologically possible, not all in one place. And the soil wouldn't have nutrients to provide all the..." He noticed that Matt and Chloe weren't fully paying attention. "You two aren't going to give in to your hoarding instincts, are you?"

"What are you golding on about?" said Chloe distantly.

Chip sighed and said, "Just try to remember what your real priorities are. I don't think a pair of pillaging dragons would be welcome here."

"Oh be gold," said Matt distantly, he and Chloe walking with twitches

down the road, Kala muttering _"This is gonna end bad-GOLD!
Hmm..."_

"Why is it that dragons are so particularly susceptible to gold fever?" asked Chip, "Can you guys make any sense of it? Guys?"

Everyone else was staring, even Draco who now had little dollar signs of iris's. "Does Matt's ship still have that giant nano storage unit?" he asked quietly.

Chip rolled his eye and said, "I suppose being part machine keeps from feeling as much gold lust as you lot. Cortez will probably have nothing left to pillage when we're done here."

"PILLAGE!" snapped Mat, now running down the path towards the city.

...

The gang caught up to see Matt barely being held down by a pile of guards at the gates. "Help! We need more guards. He's insane!" yelled one guard.

The group was awestruck about the design of the city. It was a perfect monument of Meso-American architecture that would cause most archeologists to weep with joy. And the fact that almost everything was golden didn't hurt either. "Isn't it the most beautiful thing you've ever seen?" asked Astrid.

"I'm having trouble seeing that," said NegaMorph, "My eyes have all been replaced by huge dollar signs."

A second later, a thrown guard landed on NegaMorph as Matt's dragon side took a sledgehammer to his self-control and he transformed, clawing at the walls like a lunatic. "Urgh...we can't take him anywhere," sighed Chloe.

However, the natives were greatly impressed by Matt's transformation and immediately all started kowtowing and muttering apologies and prayers. However, while they were clearly doing in out of reverence, Chloe could see an undercurrent of fear.

Draco stared at this before yelling "NO FAIR...!"

"Well, it's not like they've been worshipping you for long," said Contrinus. Draco just stared before wailing skywards.

...

Matt had lost some of his twitchiness after a few minutes and Kala decided to try her luck while he was all dragony. "Hey girl. MY GOLD! How are you feeling?" said Matt, getting a brief bug eyed expression as he screamed the gold part.

"Matt, is there any chance you can talk to other dragons while you're in dragon form?" asked Kala desperately.

"Aw that's nice," said Matt, clearly not understanding a word

Kala snarled with frustration and was about to blast him one for getting it wrong again when several warriors suddenly holding spears up against her.

"Hey! Cut that out!" snapped Matt, hitting one guard on the head and riving him into the ground like a stake. The others guards quickly dropped their spears and started begging for forgiveness.

"Oh, sod off, the lot of you," said Matt, pointing them to go away before he got an idea to cheer up Draco. "Erm...I've got to go look after...erm...Quetzalcoatlâ€|yeah, that's right. I'm his mate," said Matt innocently. The guards gave him a very odd look and Matt quickly realized the awkward literal meaning of what he said. "Guardian, I mean guardian," he said quickly. The guards nodded slowly before backing up and running off.

...

Draco glared at Matt. "So they now expect you to guard me...cause you told them I was one of their chief gods," he said dully.

"Yeah, so what?" asked Matt.

"Uh, aren't heretics who are found impersonating Aztec gods end up being sacrificed to the 'real ones'?" asked Draco worriedly.

"We look like the real thing though," said Matt knowingly.

"Yeah, but we can't act all the way like the real thing," said Draco, "Unless you know how to change the weather or whatever."

"I doubt they really believe that," said Matt.

"You know they're gonna demand miracles from us," said Draco.

"Don't be silly," said Matt, waving a paw dismissively.

"Hey, Matt, why haven't you turned back?" asked Draco suspiciously.

"Uh, no real reason, I guess I'll just..." started Matt as he focused on changing back only to have no physical reaction, "Uh oh."

"Why uh oh? I don't like it when you uh oh," said Draco worriedly.

"I think I'm stuck," said Matt terrified.

"Stuck? How can you be stuck? You should be in full control of your transformation," said Draco, starting to sound panicked.

"I dunno...I dunno!" yelped Matt before saying "I gotta find Chloe."

...

Hiccup and the others had also gone exploring the city...mostly because any Viking near this amount of gold would start getting itchy fingers. Hiccup was trying his best to be the responsible one, but the others were listening to him with half an ear at best.

The dragons however were definitely paying attention to the shinies...not helped that Kala was getting serious twitches.
"Gold...gold..." she said as she aimlessly trudged along.

"She's lost it," said Meatlug gloomily.

"She's almost like a Smokebreath," said Stormfly.

"A Smokebreath for gold," said Hookfang sadly before saying
"Snotlout's hardly better, that's the 5th paving slab he's stolen."

"Uh, won't the guys here be mad about the humans taking their gold?" asked Belch.

"Pretty much," said Toothless before saying, _"I don't see Hiccup stealing any gold."_ However, Stormfly noticed Hiccup pocketing a small lump of gold, practically a pebble. Toothless turned at that and sighed, _"I don't believe it."_

"Humans are greedy, what do you expect?" said Barf.

They were about to talk when the group was nearly ran down by a small group of people heading for the central pyramid with several chained people in tow. _"What are they doing?"_ asked Meatlug.

"I'm not sure, but it reminds me of how we used to be kept in the arena," said Stormfly with a growl.

The sound of wings got their attention at that, them looking up to see a flight of dragons overhead, similar in build to Matt's other form. _"Who are those guys?"_ asked Barf.

"Maybe they're Matt's distant relatives," said Belch.

"I dunno..." began Kala, saying _"They smell like trouble..."_

"They certainly do," said Toothless with a growl, _"And they're definitely not from here."_

...

Matt had also spotted the dragons...more like they had spotted him, one of them peeling off and flying towards him.

"Uh, Matt, is it my imagination, or is that the same kind of Avalarian dragon that you are?" asked Draco.

"It's not," said Matt as the dragon, a dragoness, landed neatly. "I have not seen you before. State your name," she said with a commanding air, the voice of someone used to having their orders obeyed instantly.

For once, Matt was having a hard time thinking of what to say. He had never met another plasma dragon like him before. There was Dr. Alayshia, but he hardly counted. On Avalar, he's seen practically all the different varieties of dragons, but he was the only plasma dragon around.

The dragoness snorted and said, "Are you simple? I said state your name."

Seeing how Matt seemed to be too shocked to speak, which was shocking in of itself, Draco decided he better say something. "Uh, I am the great Quetzalcoatl," he said in his most regal tone, "And this is--"

The dragoness said coldly, "You look nothing like my father." before she blasted him.

Fortunately, Draco had been designed to withstand intense plasma blasts. But that didn't mean it didn't still hurt. "Ow..." moaned a crispy Draco before falling over.

Matt said horrified, "That was uncalled for..."

The dragoness snorted and said, "He deserves worst for daring to imposter a god. Now for the third and last time, what is your name?"

"Captain Mathew Lynch," said Matt, emphasizing the rank coldly.

"From the sound of your name, you must be one of the forefathers," said the dragoness, "And by the placing of your rank, you must be one of the higher members of their military."

"Forefa...I mean, yes. The person you blasted is one of my most trusted officers," said Matt, smoothly.

The dragoness gave Draco an unimpressed look and said, "You should keep them in better line and not let them act so blasphemously."

"And you should be careful who you blast," said Matt, adding, "Name and rank."

"My name is Tlazoteotl and...I have no rank. No one has been officially given a rank yet," said the dragoness.

"Fine...Tlaz. How long have you been here?" asked Matt.

"I was hatched here, we all were. But that was many, many, many years ago," said Tlaz.

"Oh? How'd an Avalarian dragon get to Earth? This isn't even the right Earth," said Matt.

"Avalar? That's the mother world, isn't it?" asked Tlaz.

"Erm...yes," said Matt.

"You must speak with Xipe Totec," said Tlaz, "He is the king here and he will wish to know what the forefathers want with us."

"Erm...ok," said Matt, a little confused.

Draco however said, "Matt, I smell a rat here. I wouldn'tâ€| " only to be tail whipped.

Matt glared at Tlaz and said, "I must ask that you refrain from hurting my officers. If they're guilty of some misconduct, I will be the one dealing out punishments."

"Very well, this way. The daily offering will be soon and I am sure you will want to replenish," said Tlaz.

Matt and Draco gave each other uneasy glances. If these dragons were the 'gods' here, then the offerings would probably not something they'd want to partake of.

"Why do you hesitate? I can sense from here that you are hardly close to full strength," said Tlaz

"What do you mean not close to full strength?" snapped Matt, "I've got more-" Draco nudged Matt to keep him from spilling too much. "Er, that is, I've fought a mighty foe recently and I'm resting after a hard and bloody battle."

"No, your energies are diminished. You barely fight at full strength," said Tlaz, gazing closely.

Matt growled but he could think of any conceivable excuses. After all, he's never been around any other plasma dragons before and he really didn't know what they were fully capable of. And considering he was pretty powerful when he was 'hardly close to full', it would be worthwhile to see what he could do when 'fully-charged'.

"This way, my captain," said Tlaz smoothly

As Matt and Draco followed after her, Draco whispered, "You're not really gonna-"

"Do what?" hissed Matt.

"You know, eat the...you-know-what," said Draco, "I mean clearly you wouldn't, but peer pressure can be..."

"Eat what?" hissed Matt as they followed Tlaz.

"Well, you do know what the Aztecs used to 'feed' their gods, right?" asked Draco.

"Hearts...wait, what? Miss Tlaz...are we going to eat hearts?" said Matt.

"Of course, plump and still pumping," said Tlaz with satisfaction, "Isn't it the most filling meal?"

Matt winced. "Is there an alternative? Erm, command doesn't look kindly on heart eating. It's erm...unhygienic."

Tlaz gave him an odd look and said, "Then how are they expecting us to keep our strength up? Is not our power derived from the flesh and blood of our enemies and subjects?"

"Not the last time I checked. I just explode them," said Matt.

Tlaz looked at him with befuddlement and said, "Well, you need to gain your full strength somehow. Perhaps you'd like to sample the bones. I know it's only for dogs, but you might get some of your full power back."

Matt looked at Draco who mouthed someone having their head removed...translating to what would happen should they be rumbled by what were basically 100 Matthews. "Sounds...tasty," said Matt with a wince.

Tlaz nodded and said, "As you wish, Captain. In time, you'll discover that flesh is better to eat than anything else." Matt and Draco turned to go before Tlaz said, "You lost someone, Captain...not long ago either."

Matt stiffened and he said slowly, "What makes you say that?"

"Any female could tell. It's in your eyes," said Tlaz smoothly.

Matt felt more than a little annoyed when he said, "If you must know, I have lost someone, LITERALLY lost someone. And I'm fully intent on finding her again."

"If she has been gone this long...then she was obviously a fool," said Tlaz in a honey-layered voice

Matt spun around and snarled, "You don't know anything about her! You have absolutely no basis to make any kind of discriminating remarks about her. So I highly suggest you not speak ill of her anywhere near my hearing range."

Tlaz, despite everything, didn't look frightened. "My apologies," she said bowing and her eyes glinting in a way that made Draco's horns quiver very briefly.

Matt growled and said, "C'mon, Draco, we're eating out."

"Yeah...I think that's a good idea," Draco said, noting how Matt briefly had the same glint.

...

Sometime later, Chloe found Matt at the riverbank near the city. "Matt, I don't think this place..." she started when Matt turned around, showing he had a bit of blood on his chin. "Oh, please tell me that didn't come from where I think it came from," she said.

Matt said, "It's just some big water rat I saw," gloomily.

Chloe gave a sigh of relief and said, "Doesn't sound particularly appetizing to me, but it's a lot better than what those other dragons were eating."

"They didn't see, did they?" said Matt, worried.

"Fortunately, no," said Chloe, "As soon as we realized what was about to happen, we made them look away. Those kids will probably have to deal with bad enough stuff without seeing a human sacrifice."

"The dragons didn't...did they?" said Matt.

Chloe shook her head, "Not exactly...a couple did but the others looked like they were in a trance, breathing in a gas."

Matt made a face of disgust and said, "Ok, new plan, we need to grab whatever souvenirs we want and get out of here ASAP."

Chloe looked up at Matt and said, "Fine, turn back and let's split. I suspect NegaMorph stole a building already."

"I'm afraid it's not that simple," said a voice. The two siblings looked around for the source and noticed that time seemed to be slowing down all around them.

Matt rolled his eyes. "I haven't seen you in a while. How can us mere mortals help you?" he said, turning to see half of the duo's resident Ancient stalkers.

Cydra was floating there in his usual computer-screened cloak. However, the glow from the screens seemed darker than usual. "Your team has a mission to complete here. One that this world's fate depends on," said Cydra in a serious tone.

"You broke our ship, didn't you?" said Matt icily.

"If you are referring to the guardian drone that you destroyed, I was not involved," said Cydra, "It was constructed to make sure no other space traveler would discover this planet's secrets. Circe was one, this gilded city is another."

"And those guys are number 3?" snapped Matt, pointing a claw skyward where a trio of plasma dragons flew.

Cydra looked up and said, "Actually, they were the main secret here. Though it appears that the rip engine exhaust had altered the reality of this valley to produce the precious metals the natives used to build this city. Even still, I wouldn't have expected them to become the head of a theocracy." He said the last word with much contempt and disgust.

"What are they?" growled Matt with a furiousness that made Chloe jump back a bit.

"Well, I see that a history lesson is needed," said Cydra, "Have you ever wondered why you've never seen any other plasma dragons on Avalar?"

"I never really wondered. I presumed it was the nanites hybridizing the EXP in my blood," said Matt.

"There's a bit of truth to that. Though it is more likely that your nanites influenced the EXP," said Cydra, "Well, I suppose you two haven't heard much Avalarian history that predates Malefor or the Atlantean conflict."

"I'm all ears," said Matt, lying down.

"Well, this is all started about an age before Malefor, more or less," said Cydra, "In the earlier years of the Avalarian

civilization, dragons were a lot more connected to their elements than how they are today. It was said that they were direct descendants of the elementals that once roamed Avalar."

Matt nodded. "Like that lava monster," he said.

"A darker version, but yes," said Cydra, "Well, while most of the dragons were satisfied with their lower level of power, there were some who felt that dragons should remain the most powerful creatures in the universe. They soon formed a cult that was determined to bring dragon power back to the 'golden years' of their civilization."

"Let me guess, the Atlanteans didn't like their top spot being challenged," said Matt.

"This was actually quite some time before the Atlanteans found Avalar," said Cydra, "As such, the cult were able practice arcane rituals and selective breeding for quite some time before anyone found what they were doing. Eventually, they managed to produce a new race dragon that can channel energy in its purest form."

"Then how did you know?" said Matt.

"The Avalarians kept very good records, even though a fair amount was destroyed during Malefor's first war," said Cydra, "Anyways, these new dragons, called the sun dragons, were considered the pinnacle of draconic evolution. However, while physically they were extremely impressive, they had not developed very well mentally, mainly being told that they were the 'chosen race' and 'the greatest in the land'. Though extremely full of themselves, they were tolerated by the other dragons until an ugly incident when a particularly self-absorbed brute was spurned by a fire dragoness."

"They went warlike on the others?" said Matt distantly.

Cydra nodded, "Yeah... Fortunately, while the sun dragons were powerful, they were vastly outnumbered by all the other dragons. The sun dragons and their cult were destroyed, but there were still a few unhatched eggs that were left. And I hope you two have learned about the custom of dragon eggs by now."

"Yeah...the cave," said Matt.

"Good, however, those eggs had already been fertilized and so the only thing to do was to put them in stasis and let them hatch again after the world had healed," said Cydra, "However, Malefor upset that plan. Fast forward to when the Atlanteans made contact and opened negotiations with the Avalarians. But even then, they were always looking for a new weapon to combat their enemies and they managed to find the cave where the sun dragon eggs were hidden.

"Now at the time they had just made first contact. Malefor was already on edge and despite warnings, a science team went in to harvest DNA. I'm ashamed to say Malefor's egg was the one they wanted. Of course, the dragon elders gave permission later on...but by then the eggs were out of their field.

"The sun dragons were hatched and placed through even more selective breeding, along with extensive genetic tailoring. Eventually, the first clutch of plasma dragons were created. They are much like you

are now, but while the sun dragons' heads were filled with their followers praises for their greatness, what was mostly in the heads of the plasma dragons was where to fire and who to attack."

"You had your own McNeil," said Matt.

Cydra nodded, "When the council cottoned on, a warship was sent in. The troopers had orders to secure the research and return the sun dragons to the Avalarians for deprogramming. They were late. The science team found out too late that a dragon does what it wants."

"So how did these dragons get here?" asked Chloe.

"I'm getting to that part, don't rush the story," snapped Cydra.

"Fine, geez," said Chloe.

"Well, after a bloody struggle, the plasma dragons were captured, but there wasn't really anything anyone could do for them. The elders demanded the grown dragons be put down. But there were still plenty of eggs that had yet to hatch. The elders decided not to leave destiny up to chance and as part of the treaty, the plasma dragon eggs were to be hidden on a faraway world where no one would attempt to abuse them. And that place was here. The term 'was' is much more apparent now."

"They must have dropped on the city," said Matt.

"More like the city dropped on them," said Cydra, "There was an underground base here once, but the Aztecs dug it all up. They found the eggs which they thought were the 'seeds of the suns' and managed to hatch a few. Naturally, the dragonlings were mistaken for gods and raised as such. And you can see what it did to their dispositions."

"Gave them egos?" said Matt, before wincing, "Urgh...my head."

"Oh dear, I had a feeling that would kick in soon," said Cydra, "One of the few things the plasma dragons carried over from the sun dragons was their ability to be fueled by praise. Matt usually has enough jabs and disrespect from your crew to keep his power and ego in check, but here he'll be more susceptible to the corruption that has befallen the other dragons and they'll want him even more."

"Oh...that's why Tlaz came on to me?" Matt asked, Chloe noting his eyes were getting the same golden sheen as the others.

"Yes, I wasn't quite accurate when I said these were the dragons that first hatched. They're actually their grandchildren," said Cydra, "The dragons kept control of how many eggs were laid and hatched and now all the dragons here are siblings and cousins and they'll want new blood."

"Oh hell no," said Matt, before wincing again, Cydra saying "In a few days, you won't care unless we get you away from these worshipers."

"Then what are we waiting for?" asked Chloe.

"Did I not tell you that there's a mission you must perform?" asked Cydra, "There are still many original eggs that have not hatched yet. Even if Matt were to 'contribute', the dragons will eventually be forced to hatch more and the grandchildren won't be nearly as conservative as their ancestors. In time, the dragon population would grow too large and they'd spread out from this valley to conquer the rest of the Americas and then the world. Like an infested appendix rupturing."

"Lovely image," said Matt weakly.

Cydra said "However, those eggs could be saved. The old base should have a null portal that'll connect to the nearest active Avalarian colony," said Cydra before adding "The other's a self-destruct."

"So we just get the eggs away from here and then blow everything up?" asked Chloe.

"Well, you also need to get the people to leave this valley," said Cydra, "Though they do really deserve to be trapped here, the timeline requires them to become nomadic for the next few centuries."

"Ok. I could sing," said Matt, taking a deep breath.

"Okay, okay, they don't deserve that much," said Cydra quickly, "Try appealing to their superstitious nature. Make it seem like the fates decreed it would be a very good idea to leave this valley quickly. I'm sure you have the resources to make that happen."

"Yeah...but first, I'd like my thumbs back. Don't say you can't. Chloe told me how you made an escape pod out of nothing," snapped Matt.

"Yes, we ancients are quite capable at transmuting lesser beings. Very well then, you probably need as few distractions as possible anyways," said Cydra before putting a hand on Matt's forehead.

"Is this really all it ta-CHEIJWAFUWEUFIHER!" said Matt, his eyes spinning as he gibbered nonsense before turning back. "What a RUSH!" he said dizzily.

"Be cautious, the dragons here will try to drag you down to their level of depravity and your instincts will be willing to aid them," said Cydra, "You must never lose track of what you truly value and who your real friends are."

"Blargle," managed Matt dizzily.

Cydra shook his head before turning to Chloe and said, "Keep an eye on him and make sure he doesn't stay with the other dragons for too long. Especially not Tlazoteotl and Xipe Totec."

"Why those two?" said Chloe.

...

Draco was half asleep as he shot into the air at a yell of "WHAT?"

from Chloe's direction.

"I never touched it!" yelled Draco, not fully sure what he was referring to.

Morph said, "Oh, it's just an off scene thing." causing the others to be confused.

...

Cydra backed up under the furious electric glare of the now dragonfied Chloe. "She will not get within 30 feet of my brother," she snarled.

"Yes, but make sure he doesn't go to her. You know how males can be easily...allured," said Cydra. A lightning bolt earthed next to him and he said smoothly "But it's unlikely that will happen." managing to stop himself screaming in terror.

"Yeah right, it's not gonna happen," said Matt, "She's not even my type by a longshot."

"Your mating instincts would say otherwise," said Cydra. Chloe grinned at Matt's expression at that as he stuttered a bit. Cydra said, "The patch won't work again. If he gets stuck, get him out of the valley and away from the rift."

"Of course," said Chloe.

"Good," said Cydra as he started to fade away, "Then, I think what you need to worry about now is what your young friends are getting into."

"Wait, what?" said Chloe before Cydra finished vanishing.

...

While Hiccup had been trying to keep them in line, especially about that messy event they weren't allowed to watch, the others were quickly sinking into the Viking stereotype about pillaging. It wasn't helped that Matt's demon member of the crew, NegaMorph was helping them plan how to steal the buildings easily.

"Ok, the trick is to get at the mortar between the bricks to loosen them out. Don't throw the mortar away, I bet it has bits of silver in it," said NegaMorph.

"I'm not sure this is a good idea," said Hiccup.

"C'mon kid, live a little. Just because you Vikings stopped warring with dragons doesn't mean you need to give all Viking stuff. Your father would want you to be looting at this age," said NegaMorph before pulling out the brick he was working on.

"It's not that," said Hiccup, cautiously.

NegaMorph turned and snapped. "Then what IS IT? Uh oh," he said as he heard an ominous creak and the wall tipped over on him. "Don't even say it," said his hand mouth, the only part poking out.

"Dibs on his share," called Tuffnut.

"I'm not dead, smartass," said NegaMorph, melting out from underneath and reforming. "On the plus side, lotsa gold...OH NO!" he said, moaning as the street gave way and their gold vanished.

"Easy come, easy go," said Fishlegs.

"It ain't goin' that easy!" snapped NegaMorph before jumping down the hole.

"Oh boy," said Hiccup, the group peering down.

...

Kala looked down and back at Toothless. _"They're gonna go down the hole. You do realize that, right?"_ she said deadpan.

"I'd have suspected the twins to jump down right after him," said Toothless.

"Just wait for it," said Kala carefully before, on cue, the twins immediately jumped down after NegaMorph, a yell of pain indicating he had been the crash mat

"The rest are gonna go down, we better go after them," said Toothless. Kala nodded, loping forward and diving down after NegaMorph.

The rest soon followed, Hiccup pausing to gather some torches for Toothless and Starflame to light. The first torch revealed that the tunnel was a smooth almost perfectly straight tunnel, indents at regular intervals. It didn't look like the Aztecs' work since the tunnel wasn't gold nor studded with jewels.

"Doesn't Matt have those on the doors of his ship?" asked Hiccup, poking at the runes. As soon as he pushed one of the buttons, every indent lit up one after the other until the corridor was lit up like it was outside. Several screeching crackles coming out of the air.

NegaMorph had packed away his gold by then and was able to turn his attention to the hallway itself. "Huh, well what do you know?" he remarked. What looked like a translucent red wall shot over the gang and their dragons at that before after a second it stopped on NegaMorph. "That's probably not good," said NegaMorph.

A tiny hatch opened and the words smallest pipe slowly whirred out. NegaMorph looked at the little pipe before laughing and saying, "Really? That's the best defense they could put in here." He kept laughing up until the pipe shot something out that made his head explode. The others jumped back as the pipe whirred back again, somehow putting out the air of smugness.

"I think we should go..." began Astrid before they looked up to see something blocking the hole. "...out," she finished. The buzzing crackle came out of nowhere again.

NegaMorph staggered before regrowing his head again. He looked upward to the resealed exit and said, "Figures as much. Atlanteans put

security over everything."

"Atlanteans, are those the guys who made you and Matt's weapons?" asked Astrid.

"The one and the same. I'm guessing that crackling's the base computer saying something. Let me have a look," NegaMorph said, spotting a crack and peering at it before finally pressing something together and a voice said "State identification."

"Uh...salvage corps?" tried NegaMorph.

"Not recognized. State identification," said the voice, a stern anger coming to the voice.

"Uh, clean-up crew?" asked NegaMorph.

"Not recognized. Alert. Hostiles have breached quarantine," said the voice harshly, a wailing noise heard.

"Kids, it's time to move," said NegaMorph.

The others didn't need telling, Toothless and Kala spitting blasts upward. "Warning...bulkhead in sector 15 breached," said the voice as the dragons grabbed their riders and took off.

NegaMorph scrambled to get out, but the replacement bulkhead snapped down on his tail. "Ow...OH COME ON!" he snapped, stuck in place before a faint 'whomph was heard and he seemed to wince.

NegaMorph pulled what was left of his tail out, black slime leaking from it before it regrew. He may be able to regenerate from the smallest of parts, but being blown up still hurts. "I hate Atlanteans," he muttered before noticing the kids still there. "What...is...it?" he said, noticing the dozen or so plasma dragons.

NegaMorph had seen Matt ticked off in his dragon form plenty of times but these guys managed to trump him. Perhaps it was the fierce golden glow of their eyes or maybe it was the way their breaths stank of blood. They immediately parted to let a female through. "Have we been nosing around, humans?" she said deceptively calmly.

"Uh, nosing? No, we just found a hole in the ground," said Hiccup.

"Oh I know...and I think you need to come with us," said the female pleasantly.

"Now, now, I'm sure that falling into a hole isn't a crime," said NegaMorph.

"But vandalism is," said another dragon, noticing the large gap in one of the nearby walls.

NegaMorph gulped at that. "Would you believe it happened by itself?" he said. The dragoness glared and NegaMorph felt his form quivering by itself. He clutched the sides of his head and snapped, "Cut it out!"

The dragoness grinned at that. "A plasma based lifeform, this should be fun," she said, before her eyes flashed yellow.

NegaMorph suddenly found his torso being stretched out like a rubber band. "Hey, stop it!" he yelled.

"Tell me what you are and people are doing here," said the dragoness calmly.

"Minding our own business," said NegaMorph.

"Wrong answer, try again," laughed the dragoness, her eyes glowing brighter.

Hiccup yelled, "Stop it! We really did find it by..." before a low level blast knocked him off his feet.

"Know your place!" snapped the dragon that had spat it, his fellows snarling.

"Don't mess with those kids," said NegaMorph, "If Lynch knows you've hurt them, you'll be in real trouble."

"Good...if he is to be a welcome member of our flight, he needs to cut his weaker side's ties," said the female dragon.

"If you think you'll get him to join you, you're crazier than you look," said NegaMorph.

"He is one of us. His blood will do the work for us," said the dragoness.

"He's more than all of you times 5," said NegaMorph.

"Really? He will break. My sister will see to that. You, however, will get front row seats to the next ceremony...except you, one of plasma...goodbye," she said before seemingly vaporizing him. The kids stared in shock as NegaMorph's coat and hat became shadowy dust and fell in a slow shower.

"Take them away...and tell my sister it is time to make her move," said the female.

One of the dragons paused and said, "Maybe we shouldn't destroy them so quickly. Lynch may become terribly angry if they are harmed without 'just cause'."

The dragoness pondered this before saying, "Then we shall give them a fair chance in the court."

...

"They were WHAT?" snapped Chloe, Tlaz sitting in front of them.

"Caught trespassing and vandalizing," said Tlaz, "The young ones are to be sent to the court shortly."

"That's crazy. You can't lock them up," snapped Matt.

"They shall get their chance to earn their freedom," said Tlaz, "One of your...agents is discussing how their trial is to go."

"No...you'll let them go NOW!" growled Matt, his human form shimmering.

Tlaz smirked and said, "Perhaps if you made it worth my while, I'll put in a good word for them."

"Let them go or I will reduce this city to ash," growled Matt.

"In your frail form? You couldn't burn down a tree," said Tlaz.

"You know what I can do, Tlaz. Don't test me," said Matt.

"Your friends won't be in prison for long," said Tlaz, "Their trial is to start at noon."

"I know what the penalty for guilty is though. You will release them or else," snapped Matt.

"Have you no faith in your friends, Captain?" said Tlaz mockingly, "If they are truly without sin, then the gods would allow them to win."

"You harm a hair or scale on them and I will destroy this entire city from orbit," said Matt.

Tlaz gave him a serious look and said, "Whatever fate befalls them will be of their own making."

"No...it will be yours...HAND THEM OVER!" said Matt, transforming as he yelled the last part and finding himself snout to snout with Tlaz.

Tlaz simply smirked and said, "I had a feeling your willpower wouldn't hold out for much longer. You really should stop fighting your true nature. We belong on the same side."

Matt growled and, despite Chloe yelling out in shock, he lunged at her, pinning her down and threatening to bite her throat out. Tlaz didn't seem to notice the danger and said in a sultry tone, "Yes, you just want to dominate me, don't you? You want to show that you're stronger and superior, like a real dragon." She wrapped her tail around Matt's.

Matt growled at that before pushing himself away, "I wouldn't if we were the last dragons on earth."

Tlaz gave a disappointed pout before saying, "I'm sure you'll change your mind at some point. After all, it's not like there's much else to choose from."

Matt glared before talking off. Tlaz chuckled before roaring in pain as a lightning bolt blasted into her back. "You...you...BITCH!" snapped Chloe, who had also dragged up to double her punch.

Tlaz hissed before tackling Chloe down. "You dare to strike me, your obvious better?" she snarled.

Chloe glared before spasming...and saying with red eyes, "She fought far worse than you," before blasting Tlaz off her.

Tlaz roared with anger before charging Chloe again, causing them both to be knocked out of the room. And since that room was at the top of a pyramid, they ended up tumbling down the steps.

'Chloe' however just laughed as, at the bottom, she flipped Tlaz off with practiced ease. "I could always beat him...and not because he didn't want to hurt his 'dear sister'," she said, tauntingly.

Tlaz was a bit surprised by this declaration, but she was too wound up with indignant fury to back down now. Sadly she made the mistake that Matt had always made: she paused thus allowing Silvia to go to town on her with lightning blows that, alone would hardly phase her but together, one after the other to the point that 5 to 8 landed each few seconds...well.

Quite soon, Tlaz was barely standing up, bruises quite visible on several parts of her body and blood was dripping from one of the cuts on her face. Silvia laughed and trotted up tauntingly. "Nothing like a good workout, isn't there?" she taunted.

Tlaz glared from her one eye that wasn't swollen shut and growled. She was about to attack Silvia again before a deep voice roared "STOP!" The two dragonesses looked up to see Xipe Totec flying down to them. He was easily recognizable by his larger size, his particularly tall set of horns, and the cloak made of flayed human skin he wore.

"Classy. Is your baby seal hat in the wash?" Silvia taunted.

Xipe Totec landed and growled, "I shall not have dragons fighting like a pair of jaguar cubs in my city."

"Then explain to her the penalty of hitting on my brother," said Silvia, coldly

Xipe Totec gave Silvia a look of contempt and said, "And why should she not? They are ideal mates. If anything, it should be he who should be hitting on her. A dragon of your common class should consider herself very fortunate to have him as a brother."

"Really? I once broke 4 of my dear brother's ribs. He's a joke and he's already hitting on someone else," said Silvia icily.

"Whoever that other one is no longer matters," said Xipe Totec, "He belongs here and you do not."

Silvia smirked and tuned into her silver tongue abilities, "Fine, release the human children and their dragons to our care and I can arrange something." ignoring Chloe's inner voice, though the words were unrepeatable here.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Xipe Totec.

"Your, well I presume she is your daughter, is holding several of our companions hostage. You and me both can spot that she intended to find them guilty in your court if my brother hadn't agreed," said

Silvia smoothly.

"How could she have changed the outcome of the game?" asked Xipe, giving Tlaz a suspicious look.

"It's simple; if my brother doesn't agree, she'd find the kids guilty and they'd be executed. Even our resident idiot, Morph could spot it," said Silvia, walking back and forth calmly.

Xipe's accusing look intensified as he said to Tlaz, "You were planning to bribe the scorekeepers, weren't you? Or give the other team an unfair boost."

Tlaz remained silent, her head hung. Silvia smirked as Chloe gave her the mental equivalent of a high five. "Can we have our Vikings back, sir?" Silvia said, a little childishly.

"As soon as their unbiased trial is over," said Xipe, "The natives haven't seen a ballgame in such a long time."

"Wait...ballgame?" said Silvia, her brain stalling a bit.

"Yes, one without Tlaz assisting the other team," said Xipe, giving Tlaz a stern look.

"Oh crap..." muttered Silvia.

...

"That's their idea of a trial?" said Wilson. "A damn ballgame?"

"What were you expecting, a judge and jury of peers?" asked Chip, "These are Aztecs."

"We gotta help em. They're toast otherwise," said Techo.

"Well, Sue's been bargaining down the difficulty of the game," said Chip, "Making it at least feasible for new players to win."

"I knew bringing a lawyer would work. What did she bargain down to?" said Techo happily.

"Well, there's gonna be ramps leading up to the hoops so the kids won't need superhuman hips to bounce the ball up there," said Chip, "And the score system have been simplified. They have to get six points to win. However, the team scoring will subtract their points and if the other team gets 14 points, the kids lose."

"We could just shoot the other team," suggested Techo before he said, "Hey...where's Nega and Matt?"

...

NegaMorph opened his eyes weakly to hear a voice saying, "Subject reconstituted and contained."

NegaMorph groaned and muttered, "Ugh, I feel like I've been bottled up."

He finally focused to see he was indeed bottled up. "Identify intentions," said the computer.

"To get out of here...and possibly grab some more gold," said NegaMorph.

"Intentions are short time goals. Probability of primary goal: 0%. Identify intentions for breach of containment," said the computer calmly.

"I didn't mean to break into your tunnels. The ground collapsed under the weight of the gold and I went in after it," said NegaMorph as he tried to squirm into a more comfortable position.

"Truth factor 98.2%. The inmates of this facility have been, via population growth calculations, loose for 984 cycles. Conclusion: You are not the cause of containment failure," said the computer.

"Good, glad we're in agreement, can I go now?" asked NegaMorph.

"No. Containment must be re-established or liquidation initiated," said the computer calmly

"And what exactly are you supposed to be containing?" asked NegaMorph.

"48 Juvenile plasma dragons." said the computer calmly.

"Juvenile? I'm pretty sure those guys are full grown now," said NegaMorph.

"Indeed, scanners indicate a population of 212 with 84 fertilized eggs awaiting hatching," said the computer.

"That many? Oh boy," muttered NegaMorph, "And I thought a dozen was bad."

"You rebooted me. You will aid in containment or the gravitonic charge in this facility will detonate and destroy all units within 500,000 square kilometers," said the computer simply.

"Gravitonic charge? Those things are real?" asked NegaMorph panicked. Everyone had heard the old tales that the Atlanteans had a bomb capable of wiping out planets, but NegaMorph had assumed those were just exaggerations.

"Upon detonation, the gravity field inside the target zone is temporarily multiplied to 30 times that of a class 3 sun, crushing and incinerating all mass. No fallout, no environmental damage," said the computer simply.

"So, right, let's get to work on corralling on those dragons," said NegaMorph nervously.

"That is an impossible task. However, the eggs are salvageable and could be returned to the Avalarian authorities for rehabilitation," said the computer.

NegaMorph shrugged as much as he could and said, "Sure, egg rescue, shouldn't be a problem."

"Negative, your energy field would cause complications for the embryos inside," said the computer sternly.

"Oh yeah, forgot about that," said NegaMorph, "But I have plenty of friends who'll be glad to help."

"You have 48 hours," said the computer warningly before the top of the tube opened and began to suck.

"Oh, this is gonna be pleasant," said NegaMorph sarcastically before being sucked out.

...

Matt however had flown to the highest point he could find, a cliff overlooking the city.

"I can't believe Tlaz would have sunk so low. What am I saying? I completely expected that. But I shouldn't have risen to her bait that quickly. If she harms them...I'll rip her apart," he muttered to himself angrily.

He paused before muttering, "Gotta calm down. Don't wanna give into those violent urges. That's Draconus's department."

A wince got him at that. A sharp pain. "What the...argh!" he managed looking to see his claws seeming to bend into a nasty hook shape, similar to the others.

"Draconus, if this is your doing, it's not funny," growled Matt.

"It's not me. It feels like..." began Draconus before he was cut off and Matt felt like his head was splitting, his head horns getting longer while a smaller pair sprouting below them while his blue scales got a shade darker. Matt gritted his fangs which seemed even sharper than normal. With a final roar and a crunching noise, he gained a little height and a nasty bone blade was added to his tail.

The last thing he managed to see before blacking out was Tlaz trotting into view, saying, "My handsome Xiuhtecuhtli."

...

At noon, everyone in the city had gathered to watch. It's been a long time since they've seen a full game of the Mesoamerican ballgame.

"Ok...remember. If it starts to go to hell, just wave and we'll shoot everyone and leg it," said Techo to Hiccup.

"And the goal of this game is just knock the ball through the other team's hoop," said Hiccup, "Shouldn't be too hard."

"Except you can't use your hands at all," said Techo, "You can use any other part of your body, particularly the hip."

"Think of it like football from hell," said Chris, adding "Oh, and if

you lose, they cut out your heart."

The look on the kids' faces was not one of confidence. "Nice going," said Techo, "Why don't you tell them that they've got to swim in piranha waters next?"

"Nah, we're too far away from the Amazon for piranha," said Chris cheerfully till Techo nodded at Morph, who in an act of uncommon cleverness, turned into Link, and glued Chris's mouth shut.

Ruffnut somehow managed to wear off the shock and noticed a bubbling pot full of very thick liquid. "What's that?" she asked, poking her hand in.

"I do believe it's liquid rubber," said Chip before noting Ruffnut's pained look, "Oh and it's probably hot..."

Ruffnut pulled her hand out which was now covered in rubber. "Here, I'll get it," said Tuffnut before pulling the rubber inside out off of Ruffnut's hand, surprisingly leaving a perfect rubber glove.

"This is a really bad idea...but probably not in the rules," said Chip before they saw Chloe flying into range alongside Xipe Totec.

"Ah, this game is a cinch," said Snotlout, "I mean, how tough could the other guys be?"

On cue, Xipe made a nod and several of the largest men the crew had ever seen, despite having seen splitters, ran onto the other side of the arena. "Never say that when you are with us," said Techo monotonously.

"Uh, those guys have an easy average 25 strength, 30 endurance, and 50 stamina," said Fishlegs. "What's our average?" asked Tuffnut. "Uh...18, 24, and 40," said Fishlegs.

"24's not too bad," said Chris only for Fishlegs to say "That's the twins' endurance."

Chloe, who had landed, said, "Kinda sucky...none of you seen my brother or that bitch dragon from hell?" before everyone jumped as Totec 'hopped' down from his perch.

"Lady Silvia, if you and your companions would like join me from our perch. You will get a better view." he said before leaning in to mutter, "Just between us, my daughter needed that tail kicking."

"Er, Chloe, you think you can trust that guy?" asked Chris.

"Relax, they won't want to taint their breeding with my common stock," said Chloe.

Xipe sighed. "It's a stupid rule, but I am outnumbered by my fellows. It is a shame...you are quite a beautiful one," he said.

Chloe's hackles rose up and she growled, "Try it and you'll end up trying to figure out how to fly with a significant piece of your

rudder missing. And I don't mean your tail."

Ruffnut was looking at Chris, "Were you growling?"

Chris saying quickly, "I'm hungry."

Xipe frowned and said, "Anyways, the top perch awaits. You'll have a better view of the game." He turned to the kids and said, "Don't lose too quickly. The citizens want to see some sport." Chloe nodded and took off to land on the perch as well. Xipe nodded saying, with a glare at some of Tlaz's fellows. "Let me be clear: any attempt to alter the balance against these...Norsemen will be dealt with by me personally. There will be no ability for a repeat offence," he said out loud before saying "BEGIN!"

The kids walked into the court and Hiccup said, "Ok, we train dragons. This couldn't be harder, right?" Then the ball was tossed right in front of them followed by the ground rumbling as the warriors started charging them. Chloe just knelt down and covered her face with her wings. There was a sound like bowling pins as the kids were knocked aside as the warriors charged through. Except for Fishlegs, he just made a squeaky sound as they ran over him. Chloe finally peered out to see the Vikings picking themselves up, Fishlegs spitting out a mouthful of dirt.

...

Their dragons however had also been given their own perch...under guard of course. _"It's a massacre. It's worse than when we found out there was only one donut left,"_ moaned Kala.

"I'm sure at least Astrid will put up a good defense," said Stormfly.

"I don't think so," said Kala carefully before the warriors charged back the same way and steamrollered them again. _"Urgh...where the smeg is Matt? For once we NEED an explosion."_

Barf and Belch looked in different directions. _"I don't see him,"_ said Barf.

"Maybe we should ask his cousin," said Belch.

"They're not cousins. They're homicidal maniacs who eat hearts. We did see the pyramid...remember?" said Kala in her 'talking to Morph/morons' voice.

"Really? That one looks like a close relative," said Belch.

Barf turn to look where his other head looking and said, _"Oh yeah, I see it now."_

Kala, despite everything followed their gaze to see a plasma dragon along with the 'bitch dragon from hell' aka Tlaz. _"Come to think of it...but he'd never do that...cause I'd kill him slowly over a warm fire if he did,"_ she said in a sweet tone that caused the other dragons to inch away from her...her smile not helping.

The dragon in question did have a strong resemblance to Matt. But the scales were too dark, the eyes were golden, his horns were the wrong

shape and had a second pair. Not to mention Matt would never be caught dead with those gold earrings, horn-rings, amulets, and other Aztec bric-a-brac this dragon was wearing.

"If that is him, I'll choke him with that bling," Kala snarled.

"Uh, probably just one of those weird coincidences... Oh, that's going to hurt for a day," said Hookfang who had just saw Snotlout get hip-checked into a wall.

"Screw that! Is that Matt or not?" snapped Kala, glaring at Hookfang with a 'Freddy Kruger' expression of fury what caused the Monstrous Nightmare to whimper.

...

Meanwhile, Chloe was wondering the same question as she looked at the new plasma dragon besides that tramp. The duo landed neatly, Tlaz bowing before Totec and saying, "May I introduce my mate to be, Xiuhtecuhtli, father?"

Totec looked him up and down and said, "He seems to be a well-built warrior. I think he should be able to father many strong dragons."

Xiuh bowed. "It would be an honor to forward our race," he said, Chloe going bug eyes as she saw the voice, despite the slight deepness added by the added height.

However, before Chloe could say anything, her eyes took on a steely coolness and she said, "My congratulations to you two."

Xiuh looked at Chloe at that. "You seem familiar...do I know you?" he asked only for Tlaz to say "Of course you don't my darkling." licking his cheek.

Silvia held in her disgust and simply said, "I'm just a traveler. Nothing you should worry about."

Chloe's voice echoed, _"WHEN I GET OUT OF HERE, I'M GONNA CHOKE THAT BITCH WITH HER OWN BLING!"_

Silvia rolled her eyes "Hmm...maybe after the honeymoon," she muttered, just to get the reaction. Silvia winced as she learned (like Matt quite some time ago) that the voices in your head can give you headaches. "Excuse me...I need to mingle with my underlings," she said, gliding down to the others who immediately spotted her for who she was.

Wilson was aiming at her as he said, "When did Captain Slimy come back? Thought NegaMorph drained her,"

"Speaking of which, where is he?" asked Draco, "He's missing the game."

"I don't care...say, Draco. Does slut dragon's boyfriend look...familiar?" she asked.

Draco held his fingers in a framing pose and looked through them.

"Hmm, well, if you remove the baubles and tone down his skin, he almost looks like Matt."

"Exactly, I can smell the soap from the brainwashing from here. I should know, I am brainwashing," said Silvia calmly.

Wilson and Draco froze at that. "Er, I suppose you want to keep the lid on this because you have a plan for getting Matt free later," said Draco.

"Yes...first we need to work out how it got past that patch Chloe says was put on by Cydra," said Silvia before hearing a rumbling. "Morph, could you move that brick?" she said, pointing down to where a brick under Morph's feet kept trying to lift up.

Morph looked down and asked, "This wasn't a vibrating seat?" Just then, a little bit of black ooze seeped through the crack, reached up, and started throttling Morph.

"That's a no. Long time, no see, general...or do you have another rank now?" Silvia asked, causing the strangulating to pause.

The ooze seemed to seep through even more as the tendril gained mass and a shape appeared at the end, eventually forming into the end of NegaMorph's tail. The eye on it looked up Silvia and the mouth said, "Silvia, is that you? Wait, you're not still mad about those things in New York or Detroit, are you?"

"Not so much, nanites brought me back. Now then, much as it pains me, we have to save my other half's brother from himself," Silvia said.

"Well, there's a lot more saving than that to do," said NegaMorph, "Because there's a..."

"Obviously there is some kind of Atlantean base that originally held the eggs. You were trapped there briefly and told by something that if we do not fix the status quo, everything in range will be ashes...correct?" Silvia interrupted before seeing the gang's looks. "What? Matt's within 30 miles. It was sure to happen." The others thinking for a second and nodding reluctantly.

"Great, we're on the same page," said NegaMorph, "Now we just need to get the eggs out, whack some sense back into Matt, and get the smeg out of here."

Silvia nodded before wincing and finally saying "Fine, we have to convince the civilians to evacuate. Apparently time and space in this verse will be irrevocably changed if we don't."

"How are we supposed to do that?" asked Wilson.

"Look at them. They're more superstitious than a ship of pirates," said Silvia, "Just fake some ominous omens or something."

"Or we could make our own. We have enough C12 to sink California," said Techo.

"Why bother, me and Morph can turn into a slew of experiments designed to cause unnatural natural phenomenon, remember?" said

NegaMorph.

"Oh yeah," said Morph.

Just then, they heard quite a bit of laughing from the plasma dragons, especially Tlaz and her new 'boyfriend'. They turned to see Hiccup being helped up by Snotlout, all of the kids sporting some nasty bruises. "Ok, we'd better fix this first...and I got an idea. General, get the ball next time it flies this way. Morph, jump in the molten rubber," said Silvia.

"Yay!" called Morph before running off.

"Oh, I get it," said Draco, "You're gonna swap the real ball out for Morph who'll make sure the kids don't lose, right?"

"Yes...exactly," said Silvia innocently.

...

Eventually, a time-out was called. It was mostly because the warriors were getting thirsty and hot. The dragon riders limped backed to their side. "This is insane, we need a miracle," said Astrid.

"No, we need to cheat," said Snotlout.

'Chloe' nodded. "Exactly, I'm Chloe's smarter half...HEY, THERE ARE KIDS PRESENT!" she said, surprising the others with her outburst.

Chip sighed and said, "Never mind her. We have a way for you guys to win this game," said Chip.

"How? Those guys have 12 points. We'll never stop them from getting those last two, let alone make up the difference," said Hiccup.

"Meet the new 'ball'," said Silvia, holding up a seemingly innocent ball, which immediately opened eyes and said "Howdy do." in Morph's voice.

The kids blinked in surprise. "He can turn into a ball?" asked Astrid.

"Sorta, we dipped him in rubber to make it more convincing," said Chip.

"I feel like a gobstopper," said Morph happily before bouncing into Astrid's hands.

"Morph, remember, balls don't talk. Now go score or I'll electrocute you," said Silvia.

"Wait, if I'm covered in rubber, doesn't that mean you can't electrocute me?" said Morph.

"I'll find a way," said Silvia as Totec called down "RETURN TO THE GAME!"

"I really hope this works," said Hiccup.

"I know, I'm getting my butt kicked so hard I can't feel new pain anymore," said Tuffnut. Ruffnut smacked the back of his head. "Oh wait, yeah, I can."

Astrid made the first kick, the grinning warriors lunging for the ball that, to their shock, dodged out of the way and towards Hiccup's feet. Hiccup instinctively kicked at the ball with his metal foot, causing it to inexplicably ricochet rapidly before going through the other team's hoop.

The watchers stared for a minute before cheering, Totec for some reason laughing. The kids looked at each and shrugged. "Well, anything's better than having your heart torn out, right?" said Hiccup.

...

Xiuh glared as the Norsemen easily scored over and over while the other side couldn't even hold the ball. "They are clearly cheating. They did something to the ball!" she snapped.

"Well, the game was getting too one-sided anyways," remarked Xipe Totec, "Though I must find out how they did it later."

"To punish them?" said Tlaz hopefully only for Totec to say "No...to congratulate them for livening up my day."

Totec looked at them and said, "It's for the best anyways. If the Norsemen lost, their crew would make things unnecessarily complicated."

"Huhâ€|" sulked Tlaz as the Norsemen racked up even more scores before saying "At least you will get your first meal, my darling," she said, wrapping her tail around Xiuh's.

"And what meal will that be?" asked Xiuh.

"The hearts of the losers of course," said Tlaz.

Xiuh grimaced and said, "That would be a waste of warriors, wouldn't it?"

"They are failures and unworthy," said Tlaz coldly before her eyes flashed at Xiuh.

Xiuh gritted his teeth before his disgust was overwhelmed by something else: hunger, hunger for flesh, crispy on the outside but raw and juicy on the inside.

"Yes...one good meal and you'll be mine forever." muttered Tlaz.

...

The game was progressing pretty swiftly. Already, the kids had made it out of the red zone and were stacking up points. "Ok, just one point and we're done," said Hiccup.

"Good, cause the game's almost over," said Astrid, pointing at the

shadow that acted as the timer.

Fishlegs, in a thoughtful voice asked "What happens if we don't get all the points?"

Chip paused for a minute, "The amount of points you get is equal to how many of you get to keep their hearts."

"I wonder who would be the one who get their heart torn out if we stopped now?" asked Fishlegs. Chip kept silent, not wanting to mention that the dragons had all been eyeing him for a large meal.

Luckily a cheer came up as Snotlout scored the last ball just as the shadow inched over the end.

"STOP...THE NORSEMEN ARE INNOCENT!" roared Totec, a faint 'But daaaaaad...' from Tlaz.

"Well, at least things are going to end well," said Hiccup.

"Not for the other team," pointed out Astrid.

The warriors were indeed slowly trooping off the field glumly. Silvia however said, "Don't feel too guilty. Aztec warriors don't believe in mercy very much."

"Can't we do anything for them?" asked Hiccup.

"We could try to say they're too honorable to be executed...worth a try. You did win after all so your voice has a little weight," said Silvia with a shrug.

"Uh, are we sure getting between a large group of dragons and something they want to eat is a good idea?" asked Fishlegs.

"It's that or we get to watch. I believe you also earn guest of honor," said Silvia pleasantly

The kids looked like they were about to be sick. "I think I better find some more smoke grenades. We might need to do a bit of 'hocus pocus' to get these guys off the executioner's block," said Chip.

Wilson grinned. "Or if a demon busts em out..." he said, wiggling the fingers on his combat armor. Nobody had worked out how to get it off yet, least of all Wilson.

"Being carried off by a demon is probably considered worse than an execution," remarked Chip.

"I'll drop them off and leave them somewhere else," said Wilson with a shrug.

"We might need a bit of theatrics to go with it. Some explosions, some brimstone, maybe some lava. What do you think, Morph?" asked Chip before prying the 'ball' open.

Morph spilled out and groaned, "Boy, do I have a headache."

"Fine, experiments of the 600 series, as semi boss of your little crew until Chloe's brother comes to her senses, I am giving you permission to cause absolute Grade A mayhem...as long as you aren't seen. Go nuts," said Silvia before noticing the lack of reaction, "If you don't Chloe says she'll incinerate the last of the coconut cake."

The experiments left so quickly, they left dust clouds shaped like themselves behind. Except Morph, who moaned, "Can't I take a nap or something first?"

"Do it or die," snapped Silvia.

Morph waddled off muttering, "No rest at all, she's even bossier than the regular Chloe."

A split second later, a lightning bolt hit Morph. "MOVE IT!" she snapped. That prompted Morph to move, though it was a bit more vertical than Silvia expected.

"Ok. Now then, general. You and Techo...show me this computer. I might have an idea to deal with these dragons without killing them," she said.

...

Getting back down into the underground base was rather easy. Though NegaMorph got blasted a few times.

"Ok, compy. Let's get this clear: we have to either de-evil all the dragons or kill them and steal their eggs...or you're gonna blow up half of North America," said Silvia carefully, who had, through agreement between her and Chloe, remained in control for a bit.

"Half of North America? I thought it was only this valley," said NegaMorph.

"Explosive yield must allow no chance of avoiding the blast radius," said the computer before saying "Your confirmation is correct."

"Ok, so taking the eggs and beating it isn't a good idea anymore," said NegaMorph.

"The eggs alone are insufficient. The risk to the indigenous population must be diffused," said the computer calmly; an image of the earth appearing, red spreading out from what was probably the base location, "Even if the eggs are taken, the dragons will spread out in all directions. Avalarian dragons would have no barrier from the oceans. In less than 3 cycles, the planet would be overrun. This is the most likely scenario at 99.231%"

Techo turned to Silvia and said, "Ok, what's your 'brilliant' plan to deal with these dragons without killing them?"

"Computer, I am uploading a file to you. Can you modify the bomb to carry out this function?"

The computer beeped before saying, "A neural purge. This would effectively remove the genetic programming from the plasma dragons,

rendering them harmless. Timeline projections indicate this as a favorable outcome for the planet with a 94.714% positive probability. The bomb will be prepared within 22.6 hours. The eggs must be removed from the city radius however as projections indicate the radiation used would be highly toxic to both them and the human population...equivalent to an ionic radiation bomb."

"Wait, are you changing the graviton bomb into an amnesia bomb?" asked NegaMorph.

"Sure. Why not?" said Silvia.

The computer saying, "You never put the possibility forward...organics always presume."

"Well, that certainly makes the situation simpler," said Techo, "Though we still have to get the boss back before he does anything...unsavory."

"Yes...we should do thatâ€|I'M TELLING THEM!" snapped Silvia, causing everyone to jump as she yelled at her reflection.

"Ah, arguing with your better half?" asked NegaMorph.

"Quiet, you. Let's just get on with it," said Silvia icily.

...

The next day, it seemed like the end of the world had begun, or at least it appeared that way to the citizens of El Dorado. There were earthquakes, small volcanic eruptions, flash floods, windstorms, a cold snap, and several reported sightings of demons that are always gone before the dragons could investigate.

Silvia and Chloe both used their shared eyes to watch the mayhem and the confused dragons. "You do good value for cake," said Silvia, impressed before noticing that, while alot of buildings were now flat, there was a surprisingly lack of rubble. "Ok, Nega. Share," she said dully.

"Share what? I don't know what you're talking about," said NegaMorph. Silvia sighed before grabbing NegaMorph by the tail, hoisting him up into the air, and shaking him. On cue, a half dozen gold blocks fell out, causing the other mercs present to growl angrily. It was this that reminded Nega that to mercs, gold was their addiction...and he'd just held out. "Uh, you know there's plenty more where that came from, right?" said NegaMorph.

"GET HIM!" yelled one of the mercs. Silvia stepped back and watched as for the first time in NegaMorph's history, he was overpowered in melee by humans.

Chip sighed as he watched the mercenaries fighting for gold as badly as dragons. "I hope that some of you are aware that precious metals such as gold are considered valuable primarily because of their rarity and thus the mass introduction of this substance to Nullspace would have a detrimental effect upon their value and adversely affect the economy as a whole," he said.

A merc stopped at that and said "What the hell are you talking

about?" causing Chip to sigh and say "Carry on."

Morph walked up and said, "Ok, we're ready to do the stampede in a few minutes. Took a while to gather up all the little dickens."

"Excellent," said Chip, "At this rate, we'll have the natives wanting to clear out by sundown."

Morph sniffed and said a little tearfully, "Jumba would be proud."

"Really?" said a voice above them.

Morph jumped and landed in Chip's arms. "Morph, have you been collecting souvenirs? You feel heavier," said Chip.

"Maybe..." said Morph with shifty eyes.

The three plasma dragons on the roof said coldly, "Take them."

Morph quickly melted out of Chip's arms and slipped through the cracks on the floor. Similarly, NegaMorph disappeared into his shadow which quickly fled.

...

"It seems I shouldn't have trusted you after all. I thought the ball trick was amusing...but my patience is now long over," said Xipe Totec, glaring at the gang, "My warriors will find the norsemen...and their pets."

"You won't find them that easy to take," said Chris, "The dragons alone are pretty tough, but the kids have been trained to fight dragons."

"Good...so they won't mind the...experiments I did on some of my elite guard. The old ones left some interesting reading in the catacombs below," said Totec.

Silvia looked concerned at that. "You couldn't have," she said, "You guys couldn't know how to operate a computer, let alone use any data from down there."

"Not everyone buys into their own act. I know exactly where we came from. I'm surprised the old ones took so long to come after us," said Totec in a bored tone, adding, "Thank you for bringing a compatible officer to help expand out gene pool by the way."

Silvia glared and said, "Brainwashed or not, he would never bed with that skank of a skink."

"Believe me, my daughter is as skilled in the sciences as I am. All it took was some magic and a few rare pollens," laughed Totec, adding, "Of course I have wanted to try something the books called 'gene replacement'. You could be a sister in law."

Silvia snarled and her scales crackled with electricity, "If anyone of you lays a claw on me, I'll eat your heads."

Xipe sighed...before spitting a concentrated blast that pinned Silvia to the wall. "You bore me. Take them away and send my elite guards to find the others," he said in a bored tone as Silvia slumped down, smoking and unconscious "...and take her to my alchemy room."

...

NegaMorph eventually met up with Morph and took him down to the computer in the catacombs. However, the computer wasn't too helpful at first, preferring to rub in their defeat. "I did warn you all that they are advanced bioweapons. You honestly thought you could take them?" it said.

"Well, I thought they would be too hyped up by their 'godhood' to recognize advance science," said NegaMorph.

"Scanning...47 scientific journals and guides, as well as advanced equipment is not at their designated locations since I was last online," said the computer.

"Well, you could have told us they weren't that ignorant," snapped NegaMorph.

"Many of them are. I was only just made aware of the situation," said the computer.

"Well, I hope you have an armory cause it looks like we're gonna need it," said NegaMorph.

"It was destroyed by a rock fall. However surface defenses are still operational," said the computer before pausing, "How are you as acting as a demon?"

"Ought to be pretty easy, seeing how everyone mistakes me for one," said NegaMorph, a little annoyed.

"Good...you will 'announce' curses as I surgically destroy buildings. The white, brainless clone of you will aid you. The bomb will detonate in 5 hours," said the computer.

"Does this mean we're not doing the stampede?" asked Morph.

"Negative...proceed. The bomb will detonate regardless of your success in forcing an evacuation," said the computer coldly.

"Okeydokey," said Morph, "NegaMorph, better get your costume on." He opened his stomach hatch and pulled out some Aztec garments. "I made them myself using Pleakley's DNA. Please don't force me to do it again."

NegaMorph lifted a piece up. "I'm not wearing that. I don't need to wear that." he complained only for the computer to say "It will increase success rate by 50%"

"You heard the computer, put it on," said Morph.

"Oh, alright," grumbled NegaMorph before dissipating his hat and

coat.

The computer seemed to wait before saying "You definitely look like a ugly demon now." causing Morph to laugh...briefly before NegaMorph blasted him.

...

Fortunately, the dragon riders were a step ahead of the Aztecs. They had gone into the catacombs to start looking for the eggs, though not every one of their dragons could follow. "So...what do you think a plasma dragon egg would look like?" said Snotlout, shining his torch down a side passage.

"I'm not sure," said Hiccup, "We've seen how Changewing eggs look so different from other dragons. They might be completely different from anything we've ever seen."

The group continued to look until they could hear voices up ahead. "When are we going to be above ground again?" hissed a voice, "I'm tired of skulking in the dark."

"Our brothers and sisters hunt for the outsiders, but someone must protect these," said another voice.

"Why should we? They're never going to let them hatch anyways," hissed the other voice.

"Shh...Totec will be furious if he hears you talk like that," said the second voice scoldingly.

Hiccup waved at the others to back up a bit at that. "Ok, I'm pretty sure the eggs are over there, but how do we get by the guards?" whispered Hiccup.

"We rush them, we're Vikings," said Snotlout, though the others filtered this out a little while they waited for an actual idea.

"Ok, we need a distraction," said Hiccup, "We need to get them to look the other way..."

"And then we rush them?" asked Tuffnut.

"No...maybe."

The group peered round the corner to see two shadowy figures standing either side of a room entrance, an egg in view.

"They aren't that big. We can take them," said Ruffnut.

"I dunno...something about them seems off," said Astrid, noting that the shadows looked wrong.

"We're on a time limit, remember?" said Snotlout, "We can't wait much longer." On that, the twins and Snotlout ran round the corner.

"What in the-?" began a surprised voice before the trio arrived.

Taken by surprise, the trio managed to knock the guards over. "Huh, what do you know, it worked," commented Fishlegs.

On cue, the twins were both grabbed and pulled into the shadows before being thrown back out, the 'guards' walking into view. "Now that was just rude," said one of the guards, a humanoid version of the dragons above ground.

"Ok, probably should have expected that," said Hiccup.

"GET THEM!" yelled the other one.

Hiccup backed up and said, "Guys, time to make room for the dragons."

"What?" said one of the guards before Starflame and Toothless plasma blastef them into the far wall with a double 'oof!'

"Think that'll keep them down?" asked Astrid.

"I have reason to doubt. Guys, smack to make sure," said Hiccup.

The guards didn't react to a slap, so the kids headed past them...and saw row upon row of eggs, sky blue shells glowing faintly.

"Wow, to think Matt started out as one of these," said Ruffnut.

"I'm pretty sure he said that he wasn't always a dragon...repeatedly," said Astrid.

"It feels wrong...taking these eggs," said Hiccup glumly, peering at them.

"I know, but it would be even worse to leave them," said Fishlegs.

"I know...come on. We'd better act fast," said Hiccup.

...

While the arrival of Xiuhtecuhtli was a welcome relief for the depleted gene pool, the plasma dragons were even more excited about Xipe Totec ushering in another new member through an unprecedented achievement.

"MATT! YOU GET ME LOOSE OR SO HELP ME I WILL KICK YOUR BLUE ARSE ALL THE WAY BACK TO NORWAY!" Chloe screamed. Xiuh wasn't sure who this 'Matt' was, but he couldn't help but feeling considerable dread.

Xipe trotted in at that. "Shall we begin? Xiuh. You get a rare chance to see me work my magic," he said.

"How exactly will this work?" asked Xiuh.

"A simple blood transfusion along with some...old one technology," said Xipe, opening a pendant to pull out a vial of grey liquid.

Xiuh gave the vial a dubious look and said, "Are you sure that's reliable?"

"Indeed it is...shall we begin, my dear?" said Xipe, grinning evilly at Chloe. Chloe hissed and tried to spit lightning, but the bonds tying her to the stone table had been enchanted to keep her from using her powers.

Xipe nodded before opening the vial, a hissing noise coming from it before he carefully cut his finger and let a drop of blood fall in. The vial let out a small but spectacular fireworks show as sparks of plasma shot out of the opening before the vial started glowing bright blue.

Xipe grinned before grabbing Chloe and pouring the contents down. "Drink up," he said.

Chloe screamed as she can feel the serum working through her system. Her body lit up like a neon sign flashing blue and yellow, which caused all the spectators to go 'ooh' and 'aah'.

Tlaz laughed at the spectacle before she looked to the side to see Xiuh frowning. "Is there a problem, my beloved? If her screams offend you, we could cut out her vocal chords," she said.

"Yes, her screams do disturb me...but I don't wish her harm..." said Xiuh hesitatingly.

"What?" snapped Tlaz.

"I'm not entirely sure what, but this whole thing seems...wrong," said Xiuh.

"Nonsense. In a minute she will either be out of our scales forever or a sister in law," said Tlaz loftily.

The word 'sister' rang loudly in Xiuh's ears. Suddenly, he realized that Chloe was his sister. He couldn't think of any logical reason for that to be so or any memory of her before, but he knew she was his sister. "Wait...No!" he exclaimed, walking forward to try and stop his father in law.

Xipe looked at the approaching Xiuh and said, "What do you think you're doing?"

"Stopping this...she...isn't strong enough for this. Look at her," said Xiuh, holding up Chloe's limp wing.

"What doesn't kill her will make her stronger," said Xipe.

"That doesn't even make sense," snapped Xiuh.

Chloe was already twitching, her scales turning blue. "I'm...gonna kick your...arse..." she managed.

"You see, she's already making the transition," said Xipe, "Soon, she shall be one of us."

"Not...a chance!" said Chloe weakly.

"She's had enough, turn it off," demanded Xiuh.

"I can't, the liquid must finish. Oh...she's stopped," said Xipe in a bored tone, looking down.

Chloe's skin was now a mixture of yellow and growing blue stripes, almost like a tropical drink. If she weren't moaning in pain, it would be kinda funny. Xiuh twitched again as for some reason, an urge to kill everyone in the room bubbled up.

He was about to snap at Xipe Totec when his ears picked up a distant rumbling. Pretty soon, all the dragons were hearing it and it was getting louder. Tlaz said annoyed "What in hell is that?"

Just then, there were several screams in the streets, something about 'swarms of demons'. "Demons? Here?" said Xipe confused before looking Tlaz. "Finish this one and blank out her memory. I know you love to do that. We need a goddess of love," he said.

Tlaz frowned and said, "But that's my role." Quite a few dragons made coughing that suspiciously sounded like denials.

"Then you will have competition. DO IT!" snapped Totec. Tlaz snarled but walked over to Chloe's limp body. Xipe was well aware that Tlaz hated competition above all other things, but she has been getting things her own way too many times recently.

Tlaz grinned, pulling a vial from her own pendant when the same warrior ran back. "The city is being overrun, o'lord. We need help," he gibbered.

"Overrun by what?" demanded Xipe, "You warriors are surely more than enough to deal any petty disturbance."

"It is the end of days...the underworld had ruptured!" gibbered the warrior, clearly losing it. Xipe glared and swatted the warrior aside.

"Right...I will see this for myself," he said. Xipe walked outside and to see...probably the most unusual sight he has ever seen. Chupacabras, hundreds of hundreds of chupacabras were stampeding through the streets, crawling up buildings, and chasing the panicking humans. He temporarily forgot he was supposed to be acting as a god and said "What the fuck is this?"

Fortunately out of Xipe's line of sight, Morph was riding Chupy who had been zapped to be about the size of a jaguar at the head of the stampede. His 'yee-haw' was drowned out by the noise of all the other chupacabras.

Xipe glared before grabbing the nearest warrior, "Get the families away...and kill those creatures."

"But...but how? They are demons," said the warrior.

"They are not demons," snapped Xipe, "They are creatures of flesh which can be killed like any other..." However, several chupacabras who had climbed up the temple walls decided to latch onto the creature who would have the most blood.

The warriors watched as Xipe was mobbed before freaking out and running off, screaming. The other dragons soon found themselves in

disarray as more chupacabras started swarming through the windows.

â€|

NegaMorph watched from a nearby rooftop. "It...it brings a tear to my eyes," he said, sniffing happily as he watched the city emptying faster than the living quarters on karaoke night, "Still, I better make sure that they really pack off for good. Time for the grand finale."

â€|

Xiuh sat gloomily as he watched Tlaz working on the potion needed as Chloe began to come around.

The blueness had almost overwhelmed her yellow, but other than that, her body didn't seem to change at all.

"Now then, you need to drink that medicine," said Tlaz tauntingly, trying to force a blue liquid between Chloe's lips. Chloe hissed weakly but tried to squirm away from the vial.

"I said DRINK!" snapped Tlaz, slashing at Chloe only for a blast to knock her flying. Tlaz righted herself with a snarl to see Xiuh with the smoking mouth. "You dare fire at me?!" she snapped.

"We do not harm our prisoners!" snapped Xiuh, "Especially if ones who are in a bad enough state already."

"How dareâ€|" she began only for Xiuh to say, "My dear, you were told not to harm her."

Tlaz snarled and said, "I am next in line for the throne. You may be my mate, but never forget that I came first and you can never question my commands."

"No...but I can easily promote myself as I have just proven," snarled Xiuh, walking up and looking down at her angrily.

"Is that a challenge?" growled Tlaz, glaring right back at him.

Xiuh glared at that. "You would dare disobey your father's wishes?" he said with a smirk.

"You're the one who keeps twisting them around!" snapped Xiuh.

"No, he wanted her alive, mind wiped but alive...and you use poison. Let me see that," said Xiuh, holding out a paw for Tlaz's serum.

"What makes you certain that it's poison?" demanded Tlaz.

Xiuh glared, "Then let me examine it."

"It's not your place to question me," said Tlaz.

Xiuh immediately snatched the vial, peering at it. "As I thought," he said, peering closely and intently.

"What, what is it?" asked Tlaz a little nervously.

"THIS!" said Xiuh, tossing the contents in Tlaz's face and mouth. Tlaz screamed in pain as her exposed flesh started to swell and boil over, fortunately not literally. "What do you know, it was poison," said Xiuh casually, tossing the now empty vial aside, not noticing a white blob waddling in

Morph wiped his forehead and said, "Phew, that Chupy rodeo's tougher than it looks. I hope someone was taking pictures." He looked up at that to see Chloe, jumping up to her. "Hey, Chloe...why so blue?" he asked, poking her. When Chloe didn't respond, Morph said, "Hmm...I better wake her up." With that, he proceeded to morph into Belle who screamed, Yin who squirted water on Chloe's face, and followed up with Yaarp who started making blaring blasts with his horn.

Chloe finally came too with a shriek, a plasma blast sending Morph flying. Morph landed in front of Xiuh and said, "Chloe's up."

"I noticed...get to your feet. You have to leave before she comes round and kills us both," Xiuh said, pushing Morph aside.

"I need to keep the stampede rolling anyway," said Morph. He whistled and Chupy trotted over. Morph jumped onto Chupy's back and yelled, "Hi ho Chupy, away!"

Xiuh shook his head as visions of idiocy, all featuring the white blob Morph came to view before he wandered over to Chloe. "Are you ok?" he asked her

"Well, my head feels like there's an earthquake going on and I'm on the wrong side of green," said Chloe, "But otherwise, dandy."

"Fine...now leave," said Xiuh sternly.

Chloe glared and said, "Oh no, I'm not going anywhere without you."

"Once she awakes, she will kill us both...LEAVE!" snapped Xiuh.

"Fine, but you're coming with me," said Chloe, grabbing at Xiuh's foreleg.

Xiuh was so surprised that he let himself be dragged along just as Tlaz came to, part of her face burnt from the poison.

She was more than a little incoherent in thought, but there was an undeniable urge to kill or at least maim in her and she looked around for anyone unfortunate enough to warrant that. As it was she saw her mate-to-be being dragged away by the bitch. "Kill..." she snarled lunging after them slowly.

She stumbled a bit since her depth perception wasn't accurate due to the poison and one of her eyes swollen shut. As it was she waked into the doorframe...not a good start to revenge.

...

Xiuh finally pulled his paw away. "Stop. Are you mad? She is a goddess. We need to get as far away as possible," he snapped.

Chloe rolled her eyes and said, "Oh, please, she's as much as a god as you are."

"Exactly," said Xiuh, his eyes glowing orange before an energy blast exploded out the building they had just left.

"No offense, but you couldn't be the god of anything. Not the way I can easily keep you out of the bathroom," said Chloe.

"How dare you?" snarled Xiuh, his eyes seeming to light up with flame.

"I've seen you been outwitted by guys a quarter your regular size...on a regular basis," said Chloe.

On cue, she was suddenly forced down as what seemed like flaming chains grabbed her. "You dare speak to a god that way?" growled Xiuh. Chloe had to admit she was rather surprised. She never saw Matt do anything like this. This 'Xiuh' personality seems to actually be competent. Hopefully it wasn't as bloodthirsty as the others were. "You will pay me the respect I require or you will not live to see another sunrise," echoed Xiuh, red glowing lines around his eyes, like cracks.

"Ok, ok, I get the picture," said Chloe.

The chains vanished, seeming to flow back to Xiuh. "Now..." he said before Tlaz landed with a thud. "You caught her, my dear," she said in a honey-layered voice.

"She is not so hard to catch," said Xiuh. Chloe muttered something about letting herself be caught.

"Now then, I guess I need to deal with her the hard way," said Tlaz, before her eyes glowed pink and she began tearing away at Chloe's psyche as painfully as she could. Chloe cringed and tried to defend her mind as much as she could. "Aw...why fight? It'll just hurt more," laughed Tlaz as she dug her mental claws in and squeezed.

"I don't think that much suffering is necessary," said Xiuh.

"Silence, darling. This worm needs to have her brain liquidized," Tlaz snarled, her eyes burning as she found a mental crack and pushed in.

"Liquidized? Isn't that overly excessive?" asked Xiuh.

"I don't care if she is your sister, she will be nothing but trouble until I've break her mind apart and rebuild it in our image," snapped Tlaz.

"Sister?" said Xiuh, faintly.

"Not for long!" snapped Tlaz, so focused on pouring her power through the chink in Chloe's mental armor that she failed to realize she made a monumentally bad mistake.

A second later, Xiuh leapt forward, sinking his fangs into her neck before throwing her aside. "Get away from her!" he snarled. Tlaz would have yelled at Xiuh or roared with anger, but that bite had bruised her vocal cords pretty badly. "You betrayed me. You are not worthy of your title," snarled Xiuh. Chloe slowly got back to her feet, her headache even worse now.

Tlaz glared. "When my father hears of this...you will perish!" she rasped only for Xiuh to say "Then I'd better make sure he doesn't find out," before his eyes blazed and Tlaz burst into flame, burning bright for a second before collapsing to ash.

Chloe gave a weak grin and said, "It's about time someone did that. I'm just sorry it wasn't me."

Xiuh turned to Chloe at that. "Explain...explain how I know you," he snarled "Or join her." he added, motioning to the few smoking bones that was all that remained of Tlaz.

Chloe quickly started, "Your real name is Matthew Lynch. You're my brother and we were travelling through this area when we came upon this place and those creeps poisoned your mind, quite literally, into making you think you're Zoeytecootly or whatever his name is."

Xiuh just stared for a second "What?" he finally managed when his train of thought took a nosedive off the cliff of incomprehension.

"The short version is that you're my brother and you're not really an Aztec god. You're not even really a dragon. Well, at least a dragon's not what you always are," said Chloe.

"What are you talking about?" Xiuh snapped.

Chloe sighed and tried to think of how Cydra managed to reset Matt, if there were any words or signs she could imitate. When that failed, she decided the tried and tested method. "Hey, what's that?" asked Chloe, pointing.

"What?" asked Xiuh turning to look only for Chloe to suddenly punch him.

Chloe winced as Xiuh went over like a sack of potatoes. "Always had that soft spot. CYDRA! I KNOW YOU CAN HEAR ME! GET YOUR COMPUTERY BUTT OUT HERE!" she roared skywards.

Time seemed to slow down before Cydra faded into view. "You haven't completed your mission yet," said Cydra, "I can't be popping in every time you become inconvenienced."

He yelped as two clawed paws grabbed him and he found himself screen to nose with some nasty dentistry. "Fix this NOW!" Chloe growled.

"You should be fortunate I am one of the more well-disposed immortals or I wouldn't tolerate such an affront," said Cydra before the parts of his cloak Chloe was grip came apart and flowed away before reassembling.

"Fix this or I will test that 'immortality' theory," she growled.

"If it'll speed things along," said Cydra before zapping Xiuh, "Don't call on me again until you've finished your mission and there's still the important part to take care of."

Chloe snapped, "We're already working on the locals and the damn proto-omelets."

"There's more than just that," said Cydra, "Most of the plasma dragons are not too far gone to be completely reformed with the mind-wipe, but some cannot be allowed to continue on to their new life. You already disposed of one, but you must get rid of her father. Xipe Totec must be destroyed."

"So...we gotta kill him? Before he kills us?" said Chloe, realizing now why Matt hated Mr. Black.

"You already start the ball rolling when destroyed his daughter. Even if he lost all his memories, he would never stop hunting you until you're destroyed. Not that he deserves the absolution and anonymity a new brings," said Cydra.

"I'm not an assassin," snapped Chloe.

"You have no choice," said Cydra, "This colony cannot begin again as long as he lives. And he will not give you any other options when he finds out what became of his daughter."

"I don't like you. Let's be clear," said Chloe icily.

"I don't have to like you and that has greater implications," said Cydra, "Go fulfill your mission and don't ask for my help again. Or else I'd be more interested in dealing out penalties than assistances." With that, Cydra vanished.

Chloe swore as time came back and heard a groan, "Oh, my head...hey...why am I a darker blue?"

Chloe sighed and said, "Long story, but you're alright now."

Matt stared at her and asked, "Why are you blue?"

"Xipe Totec tried to go mad scientist on me. I hope this isn't permanent," said Chloe before noticing Matt's gaze at the ash and bones. "That was Tlaz," she said.

Matt glared and said, "I remember that part. She put the mind whammy on me. I guess her death broke the spell or something."

"Yeah," lied Chloe before joking, "The bling suits you."

Matt looked over himself before feeling his head. "I hope these are clip-ons," he said as he felt the earrings.

"I don't think so...but Lao should be able to get it out," said Chloe, grinning before another scream was heard as the chupy epidemic continued.

Matt looked around at the half-ruined city and said, "Let me guess, the experiments did all this."

"Yup, we're getting everyone to run before the computer mindwipes everything here. Silvia's idea," said Chloe.

"Silvia? I have missed out on a lot," said Matt, "Er, I didn't do anything regrettable while I was the god of...which one was I?"

"You were the god of humor and theatrics," said Chloe with a smirk before sighing as Matt looked disappointed, "Alright, fine, you were the god of fire. Don't ask me what the name was because I can't pronounce it."

"Ha, I knew it," said Matt smugly, "I bet they built a big altar to me...which I hope hasn't had anyone sacrificed on it yet."

"Look, we still need to get everyone out," said Chloe. Matt stopped as he got an idea...just as a loud siren began to sound. "It's a bit too predated for an air raid siren," said Chloe, "I think we're in the final minutes of the countdown."

...

Xipe Totec glared as he looked down at the terrified humans, blabbering things about the end of days and things like that. His fellow dragons were not proving useful. He couldn't even find Tlaz or Xiuh. "SILENCE!" he finally roared. The humans quickly quieted down. The end of the world may be coming, but Lord Totec could easily kill them before that.

"Now then, this is NOT the end of days," said Xipe Totec calmly before the doors opened and a warrior hybrid ran in, staggering. "What is it now?" snapped Xipe Totec.

"The seeds of the sun, they have been stolen!" cried the warrior.

"WHAT?" roared Totec angrily, incinerating the luckless messenger. Causing all this turmoil was worthy of severe punishment enough, but the stealing of the eggs was beyond sacrilegious. "Find them and destroy them!" he roared before looking up to see Xiuh and what appeared to be his experiment heading towards the temple. He growled and snarled to his followers, "I shall deal with this traitor myself."

He flew out and seemed a little impressed to see the experiment being led. "It seems you are not as useless as you seem. Where is your mate?" he demanded.

"We broke up," said Xiuh.

"What?" said Xipe coldly before a plasma blast from Chloe knocked him back

"The thing is I already have a mate and I know she's not dead," said Xiuh, "And even if I were available, Tlaz was way too frivolous."

"You killed her..." said Xipe, getting up with a worrying air of

calm.

"I might have spared her, but she was attempting to mentally puree my sister and I couldn't let that happen," said Xiuh.

"You seem to be remembering...a shame..." said Xipe before spitting a plasma ball that, despite Xiuh trying to block, blasted him flying. Chloe quickly tried to blast Xipe but her blast was knocked away with a flap of his wing. "You appear to have been a waste of effort," said Xipe, "Not only have you failed to conform to our ideals, but you have brought about incalculable damage. There is only one penalty to answer that with."

"Let me guess...death," said Chloe, surprising herself at her almost-brotherly sarcasm.

"Nothing less," said Totec, "And you shall receive it by the most brutal means I can achieve."

"Bite me," snarled Chloe, spitting a stream of flame at him

Totec flapped his wings and snuffed out the flame. "If you insist," he said before lunging forward, fangs bared.

Chloe was shocked when Xiuh/Matt tackled Totec at that, the two roaring and clawing at each other as they tried to inflict maximum damage. Chloe wanted to help Matt, but there was no way she could fire a blast and make sure it wasn't Matt who could get hit. She winced as Totec proved that he has years, possibly centuries more experience as he got his opponent in a tail lock, choking him.

"You are not worthy to be one of us," said Totec to the gasping Matt, "I don't know what celestial error gave you this power, but that mistake is about to be corrected."

A roar behind him suddenly brought Chloe back to his attention...too late. The dragoness barreled into Totec, knocking Matt out of his grip. Chloe had definitely snapped, tearing at Totec before finally being kicked away, though Totec was the worse off it seemed.

Totec was bleeding from several spots, some of it looking quite serious. But he had more than enough strength to keep fighting. That was...until Chloe spat another plasma blast into his chest, knocking him back. Xipe Totec grimaced in pain. That particular wound was deep, but he wasn't about to let that stop him.

Chloe glared, her eyes glowing with energy as she stalked towards Xipe. "You're just a jumped up bully...and I don't like bullies," she hissed.

Xipe glared back and said, "I am superior to you in every way. The idea that you can vanquish is completely unimaginable. You barely even know how your powers work."

"I'm a fast learner," said Chloe before her eyes glowed and Xipe's forepaw burst into flame.

"What? What are you doing?" demanded Xipe.

"Putting you out of my misery," snarled Chloe before, her eyes...and

Xipe both blazed.

Matt walked over to Chloe as Xipe Totec's body burned. "Ok, mission accomplished. That takes care of all the loose ends, right?" he asked.

"There's the natives...and the other dragons," said Chloe, before yelping as Matt shoved Xipe's necklace brace around her neck. "You're the boss now. Tell the natives to get the hell out," he said.

"Uh, why don't you? You were next in line for the throne and no one knew you defected yet," said Chloe, shoving the necklace brace back towards Matt.

Matt tried to push it back. "Oh no, the creepy makeover's more than good enough for me," he said before an explosion at the temple made them both stop and look.

"That wasn't the amnesia bomb, right?" asked Matt.

"I'm pretty sure it wasn't," said Chloe.

"Yeah...given I can remember everything...fine," snapped Matt, snatching the necklace and shoving it on before heading back for the temple.

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The natives were backing away in terror from the hold that had opened up in the floor. It wasn't just because it was formed from an explosion, but because of the hellish stench and demonic screeches coming from it. In horror, they saw something rising from the hole, a hideous demon draped in the clothes of the dead and the bones of the slain. "I am Xelotl, god of the underworld," said the creature in a wretched voice, "The time has come for all mortals to leave El Dorado for the twilight of the gods is nigh."

The dragons looked at one another skeptically while the humans just stared, frozen in horror. Xelotl stared for a second before snapping "What? Do you need written confirmation? Get the smeg out."

One of the dragons snorted and said, "He is no-"

That's when Xelotl opened his fanged hand and shot several black darts that landed in the dragon's chest. The dragon twitched before falling over. "See how even your gods can be felled by the darkness of the underworld," said Xelotl before shooting out more darts.

The natives stared for a second before all screaming in unison and fleeing, therefore missing 'Xelotl's' head exploding from the sound overload and regenerating "Damn, these Aztecs got some good lungs."

As soon as the natives had fled, Matt and Chloe landed in through the demolished roof. Matt looked around and said, "Nice job, NegaMorph."

"I'm just that good," said NegaMorph before the trio heard the dragons growling before they noticed Matt's new digs.

"What happened to Xipe Totec?" asked one.

"He has fallen, and so has his daughter," said Matt.

The dragons glared before all bowing before the duo, one sneering at NegaMorph, "Now you fall."

"To this guy? Not even in his dreams," said NegaMorph before shooting some darts into Matt. Chloe winced as Matt keeled over with several dozen darts all over him. "Anyone else want to take a nap?" boasted NegaMorph.

The dragons all backed up as NegaMorph laughed, "As soon as you are all out of this city, El Dorado will be mine."

"And leave our glorious city to oathbreakers, thieves, and murderers?" snarled one of the dragons, "I think not."

NegaMorph grinned before Chloe's eyes glowed...and he popped. "Oops, sorry, that was just supposed to be a defenestration," she whispered.

As NegaMorph was regenerating, he got a wireless communication from the computer, "It seems your allies are falling into the trap of power. Accelerating countdown to insure complete mindwipe of all plasma dragons."

"Hey, bad computer, Lynch was always insane," he snapped.

"Corruption of new generation cannot be allowed, please evacuate to safe distance," transmitted the computer.

NegaMorph glared and grew his head back. "Chloe...Silvia...I don't care who. That damn computer's decided to accelerate the party," he snapped.

Chloe immediately started kicking Matt, "C'mon, Matt, we need to move!"

"What?" said Matt, looking confused before a humming was heard.

"Matt, unless you want to lose your memories again, I suggest flying away, now!" snapped Chloe. The other dragons jumped aside as the others shot skyward, some taking off in pursuit.

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Fortunately, the others had all successfully got out of the city with the eggs safe and sound. The natives were quickly fleeing into the jungle as their city seemed ready to be 'dragged into the underworld'. A translucent energy field was slowly rising to form a dome. "Get out...dammit," muttered Techo.

The dragons were also worried, especially Starflame. "_C'mon, c'mon, c'mon,"_ she said desperately, "_You have to get out. You can't just leave me here."_

A trooper ran up. "Techo...getting computer activi-ARRGH!" he began

before a blast shot through him, several turrets unfolding from the nearby ground. Fortunately, most of the turrets weren't aiming at them. They were aiming at the several plasma dragons that were trying to fly out of the city. The remaining turrets were firing on the gang.

Kala/Starflame shot to sense when one blast shot past one of the eggs, sending it rolling along the ground. She quickly ran after the egg, especially since it was rolling towards the river. As it was, she barely managed to grab it in time. _"Oh...that was close,"_ she muttered.

She checked the egg over for any damages. She spotted a few hairline cracks, probably from being sent rolling. But they didn't look very deep and they probably wouldn't hurt the hatchling inside, right? Suddenly, she could hear movement from within the egg as well as feel something to starting to push out against the shell.

"Aw...so cute," she said to herself before part of her brain quickly supplied what she was doing, _"No, bad egg, stop hatching, it's not time for you to be hatching."_ A claw popped out at that, Kala facepawing and saying, _"Really, it's not worth coming out."_

However, the hatchling would not be denied as the side near the claw cracked open. Soon after that, a damp form crawled out of the eggshell. It was most definitely a dragon, though it had no traces of horns, spines, or even any teeth. The baby dragon looked up Kala with barely-open eyes and made a high-pitched squeaking sound.

Kala twitched at that. _"No...not gonna...not gonna...ARGH...TOO CUTE!"_ she whimpered. Unable to resist any further, she nuzzled the dragonling and said, _"Welcome to the world, little one."_

...

Matt and Chloe however were heading up as fast as possible as blasts shot around them. Every so often they'd hear a yell as one of the other following dragons was tagged but all they focused on was the shrinking hole that was the shield.

"We're not gonna make it!" cried Matt.

"Yes we will, keep flying!" snapped Chloe.

"What kind of shield is this?" asked NegaMorph who was flapping close behind them.

"Do we want to know?" snapped Matt.

"Well, if it's a basic hard-light field, I might be able to keep it open long enough," said NegaMorph.

"JUST GO!" snapped Matt, a shot nearly taking his wing off.

NegaMorph quickly fired several bolts of negative energy at the rims of the closing exit as well as throwing his shadow through. The shield shuddered and continued to close but it allowed the trio to fly through.

Matt looked back to see one of the followers hit the field, and be reduced to dust. "Fly and don't look back!" he called, shielding his eyes as a glow began to build.

"Any idea where the others are?" asked Chloe.

"We can find them later!" snapped NegaMorph.

They were forced to stop and cover their eyes as the mind wipe bomb went off, light filling the dome before fading again. Chloe uncovered her eyes and asked, "Ok, everyone remember who they are?"

"Huh? Who are you?" asked Matt, a blank look on his face.

Chloe yelped until she saw Matt grinning and she growled. "I hate you...hey, I can see the guys," she said, looking down.

"Good, let's go check on the loot, I mean, eggs," said NegaMorph.

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As soon as the bomb had detonated, the cannons had shut down. Luckily nobody had been seriously hurt, even the shot trooper having survived thanks to his gear. A quick inventory was taken, the gold they had gotten was still there, but one of the eggs was missing. However, it was quickly found, but not in the same state as when it was last seen.

"What the hell? They hatch fast," said Wilson, peering in and to his credit, not flinching when Starflame's mouth snapped shut an inch from his nose.

"They've probably been held in stasis a long time," said Chip, "They're probably all ready to hatch, they're just awaiting the stimulation."

"Ah crap...an...oh no," said Wilson, looking past to see the other eggs starting to move.

"Ok, someone needs to figure out how to get the stasis fields back up," said Matt, "I can't watch over one baby dragon, let alone dozens."

"Ok, I'll pull a graviton reactor out of my ARSE!" snapped Techo.

"Guys, let's all just calm..." said Contrinus before everything started to slow down.

"I think...you have the...right idea," said a familiar voice.

Matt and Chloe turned to see Cydra and Mr. Black. "Well, it was pretty close, but you've managed to succeed with your mission after all," said Cydra.

"Indeed. I owe you a favor," said Mr. Black.

"And I at least owe you an apology," said Cydra, "I must admit I was

more strict than I should have been. This whole valley is a landmark representing the traits among mortals that I deem the worst: avarice, zealotry, complete disregard for other forms of sapient life. I have let my moral outrage get the better of me."

"I know how you feel...I personally think we should have blown the city apart," said Mr. Black coldly.

"But now the plasma dragons have been given another chance for redemption. I hope this is the last one that they need," said Cydra.

"Fine...we can safely get them to Avalar with some...improvisation," said Mr. Black in a bored tone, saying, "These latest guardians need to be kept on their talons anyway."

"Er, you are aware that one of those dragons is newly arrived," said Chloe, pointing towards Starflame and the hatchling.

Cydra glanced towards them and said, "So I see. How recently did that one egg hatch?"

"Five minutes," said Draco calmly, despite the plasma blast he'd received when he had peered in...a plasma blast from the kid who had grinned evilly.

"Ah, within plenty of time," said Cydra, "This shall take only a few moments." His right arm started rearranging as the sleeve of his cloak slid back. When finished, his arm looked like some sort of slender ray gun. "This shall be interesting for you to watch," said Cydra before aiming his arm at the hatching and emitting energy rings from it. The hatchling started moving oddly and quickly and it took a while for Matt and Chloe to realize it was moving in reverse. Soon the hatchling crawled back into the eggshell which sealed itself back up. Cydra stopped when the egg was whole and said, "I normally don't do that kind of thing. It tends to mess up clocks dreadfully."

"That's probably not your main problem," said Matt, stepping aside.

Cydra looked confused. "What are talking -MMMMPH" he said as Starflame did, to Matt, a very experiment-like thing and chomped Cydra's head.

Mr. Black just watched with a smirk. "For being in control of time...sometimes he fails to think ahead."

"There's still another problem," said Chloe.

"Your altered dragon forms. They should revert to their normal states within a few days. But if you're so anxious to be 'normal'..." said Mr. Black before snapping his fingers. In a flash, Matt and Chloe were back to their regular dragon forms.

Matt glared. "As nice as it is to be normal again...well as normal as I can be...WHERE'S KALA, YOU JACKASS?" snapped Matt, roaring in Mr. Black's face and, with a finger snap, being turned into a small windup toy.

Despite the dragon roaring in his face an instant ago, Mr. Black only raised an eyebrow and said, "You haven't figured it out? I would have thought it would be quite obvious, even for you."

Cydra said in a muffled voice, "No...spoilers..." before Starflame spat him and proceeded to page two of experiment revenge: jumping up and down on him.

"Let me guess," said Chloe coldly, "More of your Ancient laws preventing you from telling us."

"No, it's basic relationship building," said Mr. Black, "If you were aware, you'd agree that it would be better for both Matt and Kala if he figured it out on his own."

"Erm...your buddy's getting flatter," said Techo before adding, "And can you turn the boss back please? The cymbals are causing the red mist to descend."

Cydra seemed to dissipate into a cloud of nanites between one of Kala's jumps and swarmed away, leaving Kala to land on solid ground. Cydra reformed and said, "You have a very spirited dragon here." He rubbed Kala on the forehead, nobody noticing the slightly blue glow emanating from his head.

'If you jump on me one more time, programmers help me...look, he'll find out eventually. Me and Black know some people who could help. I wonder if she's still got my number?' said Cydra thoughtfully through a temporary telepathic communication.

_'__Why can't I be changed back right now?_' demanded Kala.

_'__There is a reason for you being in this form,'_ said Cydra, _'You have an important role to play here and that requires you to be a Night Fury. But you shall not always be one. Once you leave this world, you'll soon be restored.'_

_'__I hate you,'_ said Kala darkly causing Cydra to make a grin smiley appear on his main screen. Unfortunately, Kala didn't share Cydra's sense of humor and blasted his main screen, causing his head to seemingly shatter.

"Ok...ow," said Cydra annoyed before heading over to Mr. Black who was chuckling.

"I would have warned you had you listened," he said.

"There's still the matter of the other bouncing baby dragons about to hatch," said Chloe.

"Oh, that?" said Cydra dryly before aiming his raygun arm and sending waves of energy over the eggs which immediately stopped wobbling. "Stasis field restored," said Cydra, "That shall keep them in their eggs until you're ready."

Mr. Black nodded and clicked his fingers, the eggs vanishing. "There...done..." he said icily.

"You know, Matt, there haven't been that many plasma Shar-Khan,"

commented Cydra, "There are some who see your particular elemental affiliation as a sign of prophecy."

"Kinda guesse,.." said Matt bored.

"Of course, most of it is just hogwash, but I think the one most likely to become reality is the one about you becoming patriarch of the plasma dragons," said Cydra.

Matt choked at that. "Whagferjgff..." he managed before passing out, Chloe glaring "Great...you broke him. Happy now?"

"Relax, he's nowhere near ready for that, not within the next few years," said Cydra, "Kala, maybe, but definitely not him."

"Great, now just go. We've already got to explain to the kids why I'm suddenly yellow again and why the eggs dematerialized," said Chloe.

"You may need to explain more than that," said Cydra before he and Mr. Black vanished. Right after that, time returned to its normal pace.

Hiccup and the others all looked around confused. "Hey...where'd the eggs go?" said Astrid.

"They've been handed off to someone who'll take good care of them," said Chloe.

Hiccup nodded. Given they were space dragons, it made sense that Matt n co would know people who could look after them. The natives however were staring at Matt and bowing like crazy, despite the fact he was still out cold

Chloe sighed and said, "I'm not in the mood for worshipping right now," before changing back to her human form.

"Hey, did you do something with your hair?" asked Morph.

Chloe looked down at herself. Everything was there...armor...weapons...her favorite grenade...but... "Ok...what's it done to me?" she said dully, saving up the unfettered fury for the next minute.

"Actually, there is something different about your hair," said Chip. Chloe held her hair in front of her face to look at it. It seemed like its normal black, but when the light hit it, there was a noticeable dark blue sheen to it.

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In the gap between realitiesâ€|

Cydra and Mr. Black stopped their game of Call of Duty (hey...even omnipresent energy beings got bored) as a shriek echoed through reality. "Chloe," they both said in unison.

"You think we're being too cruel to them?" asked Cydra.

"Of course not. We need to have some kind of

entertainment...HAH...headshot!" said Mr. Black as he zapped Cydra's ingame avatar.

* * *

><p>Another chapter up. This time, we've gone across the Atlantic to Aztec territory and did a bit of their mythology. Admittedly, El Dorado is more Incan than Aztec, but Aztec's more fun to do. Not to mention it's a reference to another Dreamworks film, the Road to El Dorado. We also did a bit of a backstory for Matt's plasma dragon form. For those of you who don't know, Avalar is the name of the world where the Spyro series takes place, specifically the Legend of Spyro trilogy.<p>

Anyways, there may be a delay in updating the next chapter, namely due to working out some of the kinks in the plot and such. Until it's up, check out my co-author's stories for more information on their history of Avalar and please review.

9. The Conqueror Wyrn

****Voyagers Saga****

****Broken Nest****

****Chapter 9: The Conqueror Wyrn****

When setting up a base, 'Marauder' teams usually needed to find power, preferably geothermal. As such a small team was scouting out a local proto-volcano. According to their scans, it shouldn't start erupting for about another 300 years, most likely more. Still, it was building up quite a bit of heat.

It also had something else, an extra reason why the team was on the ground instead of in a combat shuttle taking scans. "I'm telling you, Ma'am. There is a lifesign down here," said one trooper

"The only thing that could live on this hot rock would be the microbes in the hotsprings," said Alicia, "There's nothing here to support life except heat."

"Definitely not a microbe," said the second trooper.

"Whatever it is, it's dormant," said the first trooper, "Probably something in hibernation or maybe even an egg."

"Not an egg..." said the second trooper distantly, looking into a cavern.

"If it's large enough to give off that much of a lifesign, I want to know what it is," said Alicia, "Get in there and find it."

"It's a huge bloody dragon," said the second trooper in horror.

"How huge are we talking here?" asked Alicia.

"Big as a destroyer," said the first trooper, staring in horror at the sleeping behemoth.

"That large? Then it most likely won't notice you taking a small sample," said Alicia.

"With all due respect; fuck that, Ma'am," said the first trooper before checking his comm, "Ma'am. We're headed back. The newbie says that Taylos has passed out."

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A dragon that massive was definitely worth noting. So Alicia made contact with McNeil and filled him in on their discovery.

"And splitters seem to have had adverse reactions?" said McNeil.

"To an extent," said Alicia, "We've managed to get a brief scan of its vital signs. It shows particularly large brain activity even if it is asleep. It must be at least partially-sentient, perhaps even having extra-sensory perception."

"Fine, you're clearly not equipped for this and no NSC ships are in range. There is however an Empire ship in the region," said McNeil, calmly waiting for the objections

"Does your treaty give you the authority to command that ship and its crew?" asked Alicia, not showing any real alarm.

"No...you'll have to share your findings but if it's as large as you say then you'll need these particular individuals. They're on their way," he said, pressing a button offscreen.

"Share? This dragon should be ours by all rights and we won't sharing with the likes of-" snapped Alicia before McNeil abruptly cut off. "Dammit...all personnel, be prepared to receive reinforcements," she said angrily.

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The ship arrived before 24 hours had passed. It was admittedly impressive; lethal-looking with an ebony hull. "Huh...let's see what losers they brought," said Alicia, smirking as she remembered how a poorly-trained mercenary had caused the Empire significant losses.

However, the smirk was promptly wiped off her face when she saw what was coming down the landing ramp. The black behemoth that had arrived was almost a living nightmare. It stood at least 8 feet high with large arms than nearly touched the ground and had serrated claws for fingers. Its four legs looked deceptively small but gave it much stability while the gun-tipped tail was quite capable of creating a lot of damage. Its almost crocodilian head had many rows of teeth in its mouth, four glowing eyes, and a pair of devil's horns. It was OmegaMorph, the Empire's living war machine.

"Shit...the Butcher of Avias 2," said Alicia quietly.

Fortunately, OmegaMorph wasn't the only one disembarking. General Anton was a lot more levelheaded than the omniscient OmegaMorph, though he was known to possess a personal sonic weapon system that was extremely effective.

"Ok...which one's Captain Alicia?" growled OmegaMorph.

"That would be me," said Alicia, determined to not show any fear to this monster.

"Good," said OmegaMorph reaching for her only to stop as Anton said "We're not here to kill them, you omniformed moron."

OmegaMorph growled and said, "I was promised there would be slaughter."

"No, bad mutant. You're here to safeguard the operation. You're here to learn self-restraint, remember?" snapped Anton angrily.

OmegaMorph growled and said, "What's the point of that?"

"Because an empire of dead people defeats the point," said Anton with a sigh, indicating that this conversation had happened before.

Alicia decided to butt back in, "I'm sure you two have been informed of the discovery here."

"A super dragon of some kind," said OmegaMorph in a bored tone.

"And you both know how valuable dragon DNA is for genetic engineering," said Alicia.

"Frankly, I fail to see what could be better than me," said OmegaMorph

"You can only in one place at a time," said Anton, "With a full army of dragon warriors, we'd be able to conquer systems far quicker and with less loss."

"Huh," muttered OmegaMorph as several drones hovered down, followed by the skeletal forms of battle droids.

"We'll begin immediately," Anton said.

"Yeah, let's go wake up Sleeping Ugly," said OmegaMorph.

"Uh, I wouldn't recommend that," said Alicia.

"Good, I'm not you," said OmegaMorph in a smug tone.

"Uh, really, there's a reason my men haven't gotten too close to it yet," said Alicia.

"Cause you're cowards. Show us where it is!" snapped OmegaMorph.

Alicia turned to Anton and said, "You do realize it's a big mistake to let him near the beast."

"Indeed...you wanna stop him?" said Anton.

"Can't you do anything?" retorted Alicia.

"No...the Emperor's just realized that he might have overcharged his latest creation," said Anton with a sigh. The two of them quickly entered the cave where OmegaMorph was already pounding away some rock that was in his way. "OmegaMorph...what are your standing orders?" snapped Anton.

"Something, blah, blah, minimal force," said OmegaMorph indifferently.

"Yes, obey your superior officer, that means me," said Anton angrily.

"So? You haven't been giving any orders," said OmegaMorph.

"I'm giving one now. STOP TRYING TO WAKE UP THE ENORMOUS DRAGON!" snapped Anton.

OmegaMorph gave an annoyed growl before he stopped pounding the rocks. "That thing sleeps too deeply anyways," he grumbled.

"Good, now go aid the..." began Anton before he winced, a voice in his head saying _"Little mongrel...trespassing in my lair."_

"Sorry, didn't catch that," said OmegaMorph in a mocking tone, "Who am I supposed to be aiding?"

"Aid the science team," snarled Anton, ignoring the voice mockingly saying _"Giving orders, little mongrel?"_

"Big whoop," grumbled OmegaMorph before stomping off.

"Just do it, you creep," snarled Anton, the voice saying _"So...what brings you to dare awaken your better, little mongrel? The large troll is an effective rooster."_

"Who are you calling 'better', you prehistoric lizard?" snapped Anton. A few people looked at Anton with strange expressions at that.

"At least you and your human companions will make a fine meal," said the voice.

Anton's face paled and he said weakly, "Alicia...get your people out now."

"Anton, have you not...properly adapted to the atmosphere pressure?" asked Alicia. A deafening roar was heard at that point, several screams heard. Alicia paled herself at that, "All teams, fall back."

The cave soon started shaking as something very large was moving towards the entrance. Alicia and Anton ran outside to see the top of the proto-volcano falling apart as the dragon's, far bigger than even they had thought, taking off. From a distance, it looked like the volcano was about to erupt and the roaring of the dragon could easily be mistaken for the rumbling of the mountain. Nobody knew how far worse it was...

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For the kids, travelling across the globe had been fun. Dania and the other mutants had remained behind in El Dorado but the inhabitants, so happy to be free had given each of the gang something they wanted...and were puzzled as to why the requests had all been building materials...ie, a bag of gold bricks.

Eventually, the last of Hiccup's sickness faded away and it was time to go home. Though some members of the crew were reluctant to leave. In particular, Draco had been able to bring a tree...mostly cause he'd hung onto it when he'd been dragged back onto the ship

"C'mon, Draco, vacations have to end sometime. LET GO OF THE SMEGGING TREE!" snapped Chris.

"NO! NEVER! IF I HAVE TO GO BACK TO THE COLD, THE TREE COMES TOO!" snapped Draco.

"Draco, that tree won't survive in the colder climate," said Contrinus.

"NEVER!" screamed Draco manically.

Techo sighed and said, "I'll know what'll get him to get go." He held up a leg of mutton and whistled. "Here, boy, you want this? You want this?" Draco twitched at that and lunged at Techo, knocking him down the ramp.

Chip walked to the ramp and said, "Ah, home, sweet, iceberg."

Draco was already frozen solid, saying with his mutton, "T-t-t-t-otally w-w-w-w-w-orth it."

"Oh cut the drama and help us unpack," said Chip.

Draco glared before instantly unthawing and saying "Fine."

Hiccup and company were down the ramp next, looking around with Matt and Chloe not far behind. "We'll get a note away to Berk. You'll be home by dinner," said Matt cheerfully. Hiccup took a deep breath of the icy air. Believe it or not, he kinda missed the cold. But he was feeling a lot better now.

Matt waved a trooper over "How have things been while we've been gone? Any trouble from Alicia?" he asked.

"Well, the crew is fine, but from what we've heard, there's some bug going around with the dragons," said the trooper.

"Bug?" said Matt confused.

Hiccup, however, said with worry, "It's nothing to do with a flower, is it?"

"Don't think so," said the trooper, "Maybe it's just dragon flu season."

"Ok...better get back there sooner rather than later then," said Matt, whistling for Starflame. Starflame quickly ran over to Matt. She seemed eager to fly. The rest of the dragons seemed just as eager after up to 8 hours in the ship's stuffy hold. Why wouldn't they

be?

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The flight back to Berk was uneventful, Matt and his crew sailing along below in their boat. They began to suspect something was wrong when they didn't see any sign of dragons...not even Steampipe.

"He did follow us back from the Americas, right?" asked Chloe.

"Hopefully he's slower than we were," said Matt with manic eagerness. He had no wish to be eaten again.

"There ought to be at least some dragons here," said Techo, "Even if it's a flock of those annoying Terrible Terrors looking for scraps."

The group all turned to look at the newest addition to the crew. WARDEN had insisted, at spiderbot point that Chip, in Chixie form, go on a trip with the gang. "Any dragons nearby, Chip?" said Matt.

"Asides from you, your sister, and the ones that have been travelling with us, no," said Chixie, "Unless you count Draco as one."

"None? There's at least 2 dozen on Berk," said Matt, surprised.

"Wait, hold on, I am picking up one, it's just coming in," said Chixie.

"It's the chief's flying sonic cannon," called the lookout, pointing over at a dot heading for them in the distance.

"Well, that's a lot better than nothing," said Matt, "Nobody look weird, especially you, Chixie."

"Do I have a choice?" said Chixie sourly.

"No," said Chloe promptly as Thornado came into view, Stock on his back.

"Morning, chief. Job done," called Matt, pointing up to where Toothless was.

"I am glad to see you back, but we need to discuss something on land," called Stoick.

Matt nodded and waved to his crew to speed things up.

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Matt had a good idea what the problem was once they had docked. A few buildings looked damaged and the building used to store fish stocks was missing its doors. "I'm guessing things weren't so peaceful while we were away," said Chloe.

"No, they weren't," said Stoick gravely, "It was as bad as the old days. At first dragons didn't return from hunting trips or they'd start shunning us. Then last night they attacked as one and made off

with half the island's food."

"But I thought we've made peace with the dragons. Why would they do something like this?" asked Hiccup.

"I don't know, son, but Mildew couldn't be happier," said Stoick.

"Yeah, I bet we would, smelly old git," grumbled Matt. Stoick frowned at that but didn't say anything to that.

"You don't think he could have something to do with it?" said Astrid, "I mean, he hasn't been planting anything lately, has he?"

"No, he's not been off the island at all and I've made sure he's careful in what he plants," said Stoick pointedly.

"Maybe there's something wrong with the fish," said Fishlegs, "I know sometimes Meatlug eats some bad fish and then afterwards she'd let out these-"

"Don't finish that sentence where I can hear it," said Snotlout warningly.

"Please don't," said Matt weakly.

"The fish were freshly caught when they raided the storage hut," said Stoick.

"Perhaps the fish were bad when you caught them," said Chixie, "Fish are capable of catching diseases as much land creatures and they can pass on to the dragons when they ate it."

Stoick gave her a curious look and asked, "Who are you?"

"Er, I'm Chixie, Lilo's cousin," said Chixie. Chixie sweated for a second as Stoick glared at her before sighing with relief as Stoick stepped back.

"Why don't you go check that fish?" said Matt pointedly

As Chixie headed towards the storage hut, Stoick stated, "If the fish were sick when we caught them, wouldn't have we gotten sick too?"

"Yeah, that's the hole in that theory," said Chloe.

"Doesn't mean that the dragons aren't sick with something," said Chris, "Might be one of those seasonal bugs...that just causes them to be more aggressive."

"Yeah, like rabies," said Techo sarcastically.

"Till we know for certain, we don't presume anything," said Matt.

About a minute later, Chixie came back and said, "Well, the fish aren't the cause of it. They're as healthy as dead fish can be." Stoick looked at Chixie suspiciously again, causing her to say nervously, "I run a fish farm?"

"How comes Thornado hasn't been acting strange?" asked Hiccup.

"He has been irritable of late. Whatever's affected the other dragons may be trying to work on him too," said Stoick gravely.

"Wait, does that mean our dragons will be acting funny too?" asked Tuffnut.

"We only just returned," pointed out Matt.

"Besides, our dragons would never turn on us, isn't that right, Meatlug," said Fishlegs rubbing his dragon's head. Meatlug settled for licking Fishlegs' hand, everyone else either looking embarrassed or rolling their eyes.

"Where's Gobber?" asked Ruffnut.

Gobber himself answered that question when he walked over to Stoick while dragging a cart behind him. "Alright, Stoick, I got the weighted nets, the bolas, and the chains ready. Don't think they'll be enough if all the dragons come back at once, but we'll be able to get them one at a time."

"Is that necessary?" said Matt, staring in fascinated horror at some of the other more 'exotic' devices inside the cart.

"As much as I wish it were otherwise, we might have to trap some of the dragons that come back," said Stoick, "If they keep taking our food and livestock, the other villagers will think that we'll have to go to war with them again."

Hiccup said, "Dad...you can't be considering reopening the war."

"The village's safety has to come first. I won't start banishing the dragons until I know if they've really turned against us. But we don't find the reason for that soon, we'll have to start preparing for their attacks," said Stoick.

Once Stoick and Gobber were gone however, Matt pointed at some of the toys left in the abandoned cart. "Ok...how bad was this damn war? People don't make stuff like this to stop food thieves," he said.

"Well, it's lasted several generations for starters," said Hiccup, "And there has been countless casualties on both sides."

"Great...so how did you stop the ultimate blood feud?" asked Chloe.

"By killing the reason the dragons were raiding us in the first place: the Red Death," said Astrid.

"Red Death...cute name," said Matt.

"There was nothing cute about it," said Fishlegs, "It was the length of at least three ships, no blind spots, humongous fire blasts, full flight capability..."

"And it had some hold over the wild dragons," said Astrid, "We're not sure if it was like a queen bee since it had the dragons steal food to feed it, but since it ate anything that didn't bring enough food, it probably wasn't a good leader."

"Oh...goody," said Matt gloomily before pausing, "Who said that?"

"Said what?" asked Ruffnut.

Matt shook his head, "It's...it's nothing. I must be just tired."

"We need to investigate this," said Hiccup, "Let's look around for anything that's different. Mildew might not have planted anything, but something else could be causing the dragons to act like this."

Techo shrugged. "Maybe it's another Red Death?" he suggested.

The kids quickly laughed at that idea, though there was a little bit of nervousness behind that laughter. "There's no way there could be two Red Deaths," said Snotlout before turning to Hiccup and saying nervously, "That's right, right?"

"The Red Death was an individual, so I don't think its actual species should be 'Red Death'," said Hiccup, "And while it had to have come from somewhere, I definitely sure there can't be another one anywhere near here."

"Meaning you're not sure," said Matt, voicing everyone's central thought there.

"Well, if there was another of its kind, we would have known after the Red Death died," said Hiccup, "The dragons would have gone under its control the instant after they were freed from the first...I think."

"I dunno..." said Matt, turning on his comm, "Andrews...do a full scan for type 2 psyker signals...don't question me, just do it."

"Let's still look around just to be sure," said Astrid, "Maybe there's some kind of toadstool that's causing them to act this way." The others gave her odd looks. "What? Like another dragon king would have been crazier?" she said.

"Merc rule one in my life: nothing is too stupid," said Matt.

"Ok, everyone look around for about half an hour," said Chloe, "Andrews would have finished scanning by then."

Matt nodded, "Hey Hiccup...did I ever tell you about that one time I worked with NSC internal security's interrogation division?"

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While searching for possibly fiendish fungi was important, NegaMorph felt it was best to make sure that Mildew wasn't hiding anything that

could be related to this.

He was waiting with Matt while Hiccup got Mildew out into their 'trap'. "Ok...you know the plan?" said Matt with a smirk.

"We're not going with the Billy club-gurney sack-river plan, right?" asked NegaMorph.

"Nope. Go Swirly and give him the eye whammy when he comes out. You'll enjoy this," said Matt, adding the last part to Toothless.

"You do know Swirly's hypnosis will wear off in at the most three days, right?" said NegaMorph.

"Yeah, I got a fun payback for that, something for the dragons," said Matt as they heard Hiccup and Mildew approaching.

"Ok, ought to keep the nosy old coot off our tails while we wrap this thing up," said NegaMorph, "Besides, this will be too much fun." With that, he shifted into Swirly.

Matt stepped swiftly in front of NegaMorph, shoving some shades on his face. Toothless, who had been warned about Swirly's special properties had covered his eyes with his ear flaps as Hiccup and Mildew came into view. "The kid ere said ye wanted to talk," Mildew said.

"No, I wanted to show you a friend of mine. Meet Nega-Swirly," Matt said, hopping aside.

Mildew looked down at the small alien and quickly got a dazed look on his face. Unfortunately, Hiccup hadn't been as informed at Matt thought and ended up with the same blank stare as well.

Nobody noticed this for a second before NegaMorph shifted back and they both grinned, rubbing their hands together. "Ok, you ol fogey. You will now answer my questions truthfully, confirm," said Matt evilly

"Yes..." said Mildew mindlessly.

"Very good...now then. Have you done anything to remove the dragons from the island?" said Matt sternly.

"I tried to frame the dragons for causing destruction then I planted deadly flowers to poison them," said Mildew.

Toothless perked up at that and nudged Hiccup, realizing they were hearing a confession before looking confused as Hiccup just stared. "Erm...Hiccup? Oh no," he sighed, realizing what had happened.

"Hey, spin around on your good leg until you fall over," said NegaMorph.

Mildew nodded dumbly and began to do so until he fell on his back. "Ok, Mildew, did you have anything to do with the dragons recently leaving then attacking the island?" he said.

"I haven't done anything. It was inevitable that they would

eventually turn on us," said Mildew.

"Ok, we know it's the truth. He's clean...buuut we can't let a little jerk off easily. Now then...whenever you use the words 'damn dragons', you will..." began Matt.

...

Meanwhile, Chloe and Astrid were checking around the houses looking for any new plants.

"Nothing in here," said Chloe with a sigh before wincing.

"Little mongrel...hear your master," said a voice.

"Who said that?" snapped Chloe, spinning around.

"Said what?" asked Astrid.

"You didn't hear that?" said Chloe, peering around in terror.

"The human can't hear you, little drake," said the voice.

"Chloe, you have gotten all that Aztec stuff out of your system, right?" asked Astrid.

"That was Matt...not me," snapped Chloe.

"An offworlder...my sister once spoke of the dragons you called the Aztecs...beyond her control...but you are closer," said the voice, sounding amused.

"I'm not under your control!" snapped Chloe.

"Uh, isn't the crazy yelling Matt's thing too?" asked Astrid.

"You can't hear that?" said Chloe manically.

"The human cannot hear me...now...come to me," said the voice.

"Chloe, who are you talking to?" asked Astrid.

"Something...in...my head," winced Chloe, her fingernails sharpening into claws before another voice in her head said "Alert...hostile psyker intrusion...countermeasures activated."

"Chloe, do you need me to knock you out?" asked Astrid, raising up her axe.

"I'm...I'm ok," said Chloe, concentrating as her claws retracted again, "You're definite you didn't hear anything?"

"As far as I can tell, you were yelling at empty air," said Astrid.

"I think my nanites stopped it. They said something about psykers. I think Andrews is gonna have news...what is Mildew doing?" Chloe said, looking puzzled as Mildew went by singing a rendition of 'Singing in the Rain', Matt and NegaMorph seen laughing their heads off.

"Uh, what's going on?" asked Astrid.

"Singing in the Rain, a fun little song from the future. He'll sing it every time he talks about 'damn dragons'," said Matt amused.

"For at least two days," said NegaMorph, "And since we also made him temporarily lose his interest about finding out why the dragons are acting this way, we don't have to worry about him snooping around."

"Yeah, sadly he was innocent, this time...also we accidentally mind whammy-ed Hiccup," said Matt, grinning embarrassed.

Astrid sighed and said, "Please tell me you didn't make him sing too."

"Uh, no," said NegaMorph, deciding not to tell Astrid of Hiccup's remarkable seagull impression.

"It's all fixed. We snapped him out of it, just don't mention this word," said Matt, writing something in Norse runes and showing it.

Astrid glanced at it and said, "Well, I won't say it, but don't you think there's a chance someone else would say it by accident?"

Matt looked at the words that had been written. "I don't see any problems," he said innocently, a clap of thunder heard at those words. "Coincidence," he said quickly

"Say, Matt, you haven't been hearing any voices in your head lately?" asked Chloe, "Unfamiliar voices?"

"There is a third voice. It's very rude when I ignore it," said Matt.

Astrid gave Chloe a dubious look. "Ok, so Matt isn't exactly the best person to confirm if someone's hearing voices," said Chloe.

"Oi!" snapped Matt.

"I'm pretty sure that when Andrews gives us his report, there's definite psychic activity," said Chloe.

"Well, let's not rule out everything yet," said NegaMorph, "The others are still sniffing around."

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Meanwhile, Draco and Morph had decided to check the woods, in case the wild dragons were just hanging out there. "So...what are we looking for? Oh wait, are we looking for that bagel tree that Matt told me about in April?" said Morph.

"The one he told you about on April the 1st?" asked Draco dubiously.

"Yeah, he even showed me the bagels he'd picked," said Morph happily,

"Sure...why you go that way and tell me if you find the bagel tree or anything else that's interesting," said Draco.

"Ok," said Morph happily walking off in a random direction.

Draco sighed with relief and continued sniffing for any sign of nasty magic or of dragons. _"Little one,"_ said a voice suddenly, as if in his ear.

"Eh?" Draco looked around before shrugging and muttering, "Must have been my imagination."

"Well, well, well. A fake dragon...walking and talking like a human," said the voice, sounding disappointed.

"Who's saying that?" demanded Draco.

"I don't think you need to know that...however you could be useful...you have such potential," said the voice in a smug tone

"I don't think I'd want to help you," retorted Draco.

"You won't have a choice..." snapped the voice before a huge psychic feedback shot down his horns. Draco started spasming, his head thrashing back and forth from the mental assault.

Morph wandered back at that. "Hey, I found a rock that looks exactly like Gantu...wanna see?" he said, happily. Morph noticed Draco's head thrashing and asked, "Hey, do you have a neck ache? Good thing I know a little trick for neck aches."

With that, Morph waddled, over, tossing his rock over his shoulder before grabbing Draco's neck. "On the count of three...1...2...3!" he said, twisting and a cracking noise being heard. "All better?" he asked. Draco stared blankly for a few second before laughing wildly and falling over. Morph looked down at him and said, "He just needs a rest."

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The group met up at the dragon academy, though they were puzzled briefly when Draco was dragged in by Morph who made a 'shh' motion with his fingers before propping Draco, who was drooling, against the wall.

"Uh, Morph, what happened to Draco?" asked Chloe.

"Oh, he got a neck ache so I gave him a little massage," said Morph.

"Isn't that the massage that broke my neck once?" said Chris.

"Hey, you were fine afterwards," said Morph.

"Does this sound fine to you?" asked Chris before moving his head to the left, causing an audible crick.

Morph said happily, "I can fix that," before he glowed and went flat, Matt sighing with relief.

"We should never have bought him that book," he said.

"Anyhow, does anyone have anything that could show why the dragons are attacking?" asked Hiccup.

"No, Mildew was clean. He didn't say anything to show why the damn dragons are...oh crap," said Matt. Hiccup suddenly started flapping his arms and started squawking like a seagull.

The others just watched in bewilderment. "NegaMorph, tell me you can work out how to make this wear off sooner," said Matt, sounding annoyed.

"Easy, just snap your fingers," said NegaMorph, "I'd do it myself, but my fingers aren't rigid enough. No bones."

Matt sighed again and did just that. Hiccup shook his head and said, "What was I doing?"

"Nothing," said Matt quickly, aiming a warning glare at everyone

"So no one found any plants or anything?" asked Techo.

"Nope, nothing...and Mildew's definitely innocent this time." said Matt.

Chloe nodded "Nothing around town that could cause it."

"So what about those 'voices in your head'?" asked Snotlout a little derisively.

"I got them too. Someone tried to control me. They even tried to force me into dragon form. Just as well my nanites stopped it," said Chloe grimly

"That same voice has probably been broadcasting in the other dragons' heads too," said Matt.

"Could be the cause...remote control," said Techo.

"And what could be controlling them?" asked Astrid, "We know can't be another dragon king or queen or whatever the Red Death was, right?"

"I dunno...the voice defiantly was full enough of itself to count as royalty," said Matt.

"I hope it's not another one," said Hiccup, "I want to lose only one leg in my life."

"This time you got the full backing of an alien strike team," said Matt happily.

"Yeah, it would all of us against only it," said Chris, "We can handle that easily."

At that, Matt's communicator beeped and Matt turned it to conference mode. "Go for it," he said.

Andrews's voice came out, "Ok...you were right...psyker signal coming loud, clear and angry from the island chains to the south."

"Any way to tell what the source is?" asked Matt.

"All we could do was narrow it down to a few islands in the region," said Andrews before WARDEN's voice cut in. "There's another problem sir. I detected Imperial comm traffic both in orbit and in that sector as well as laser residue. Some form of operation is either taking place or is about to activate in that area."

"The Empire? Here? That's impossible, we would have noticed if their ships were anywhere near Earth's atmosphere," said Matt.

"With what scanners, sir?" said WARDEN scathingly.

"I'm guessing you guys aren't talking about the Roman Empire, are you?" asked Fishlegs.

"No...far worse," said Matt sinisterly.

"How could they be worse?" asked Astrid.

"They spread their tyranny to other worlds and enslave the natives there," said Chloe darkly, "And they create monsters to do their dirty work."

NegaMorph said, "I used to be one of them."

"If the Empire's behind this brainwashing signal, this has gotten a lot more serious," said Matt, "They're not going to play any nicer than the marauders, probably even less."

"Negative...the signal is local," said WARDEN.

"Local? You mean for all we know there really is a dragon causing this?" asked Chloe.

"It is the most likely conclusion, yes," said WARDEN calmly.

"Another Red Death?" squeaked Fishlegs before fainting.

"I don't know what that is...but whatever is doing this would have to be extremely large," said WARDEN.

"Uh, can't you guys just blow up that island?" asked Tuffnut.

"With what? We don't have a battleship," said Chris

"Guys, guys, calm down," said Hiccup, "Let's get actual proof that is actually a dragon like the Red Death."

"What more proof do you need?" snapped Snotlout, "The dragons attacking us, something big doing that psychic...mind...thingy. What do you need, an official declaration of war?"

On cue Matt, Chloe and Draco suddenly went rigid, Draco's horns glowing. In their heads, they heard the same voice declaring
"Mongrels, heed my command! Come to your ruler!"

Matt twitched before his own version of mental defense began...mentally singing. Needless to say his link was rapidly severed. Draco was a little too out of it to properly respond, but his horns both swiveled in one direction before he fell over.

Chloe however was being hit the hardest, her Viking outfit shredding as she shifted to hybrid form before her eyes turned to pinpricks and she shot up and out the roof.

"Uh, what just happened?" asked Ruffnut.

Fishlegs woke back up from the noise and looked around. "Where'd Chloe go?" he asked.

Matt winced and looked at the hole, the distant dot of Chloe's hybrid form vanishing towards the clouds. "That's her I think...scuse me," he said, shifting to his own hybrid form and taking off, pausing briefly near Mildew to call 'damn dragons' before flying onwards, cackling madly

"Guys, we need to get to the bottom of this quickly," said Chris, "We're heading back to the North Star.

"We'll get our dragons," said Astrid.

"That might not be a good idea," said Techo, "If whatever it is has gotten to Chloe, your dragons probably will be ensnared too."

"Stormfly wouldn't work for that monster again," said Astrid angrily.

"This isn't a matter of 'would', this is a matter of 'will'," said Techo, "It takes a pretty strong will to resist regular mind control and this signal is particularly strong."

Chris tried a different tack. "The Lynches are from a world that granted them mind control immunity. This is the first time anything's actually breached that control...and they've been hit by the best," he said grimly.

"They have mind-manipulation immunity," corrected NegaMorph, "They can get amnesia, split personalities, and even be zonked out by some crazy stuff, but their minds can't be overwritten, not by artificial means. Matt's typically crazy enough to power through any mind control and spit in its face. Chloe, however, is more vulnerable because of her...enlistment."

"Yeah...kinda ironic...Chloe's the only person who can kick his keister," said Techo.

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Matt sped through the clouds, keeping his eyes on Chloe. "SIS...SLOW IT DOWN!" he roared. Either Chloe couldn't hear him or she didn't listen because she kept fly straight onwards. "CHLOE...DON'T MAKE ME BLAST YOU!" Matt roared over the wind.

The only response Chloe made was to suddenly bank into cloud cover.

Matt narrowed his eyes "Ok...that's the way you wanna play it. It's not like I've done this longer...oh wait...I have," he muttered, copying the bank and following her in

Of course, the main problem with entering clouds is that you lose a lot of vision in every direction. That and you tend to get wet. However, most people couldn't make their nanites add infra-red to their vision. The wet part still sucked though. "I see you," he shivered, keeping the pace up. At least Chloe couldn't try to zap him in here. Using electricity would make it just as likely for it to fry her as well.

"Target tagged...target is doubling velocity," chimed his nanites, Atlantean runes highlighting Chloe before a unknown word appeared and the same voice said "Rogue unit...termination 77% likely requirement."

"Not for my sister," growled Matt before picking up the pace. He finally got close enough that there was no way she couldn't hear him. "CHLOE...SNAP THE FUCK OUT OF IT!" he yelled in her ear. Chloe did a quick barrel roll that allowed her to swipe at Matt with her claws. If Matt hadn't moved back, he probably would have been knocked out of the air.

"Chloe?" Matt said, sounding hurt before he growled and blasted her dead center with a plasma blast. Chloe roared before dropping like a stone. Matt rolled before swooping down after her, hoping to catch her before she met the sea at high speed.

The two of them quickly broke cloud cover and Matt was surprised to see something large and black flying a few feet below him. "What the-" was all the time he had to say before the thing slugged him in the face at a speed that just about matched the rate he had been powerdiving. Matt managed to stabilize before he realized who it was. "Don't have time for this," he muttered, plasma controlling OmegaMorph apart before continuing his nosedive, just catching Chloe in time.

Matt didn't have a second to congratulate himself before a large amount of a black tar-like substance suddenly splatted on top of Matt, knocking him into the sea. He immediately tried to swim up to the surface, his old phobia raising its head before, to his terror, he saw that the damn goo had glued him to his unconscious sister. The two of them started to sink until a claw reached down and pulled them out of the water. Of course, considering it was OmegaMorph doing the lifting, it wasn't much safer than drowning. "Oh...hi there," said Matt, mock cheerfully

"Lynch, it looks like you're in a sticky situation," said OmegaMorph mockingly.

"Man, you're definitely related to Nega. His humor was bad too," said Matt, before coughing, "Dude...breath mint."

"You don't know much I'd like to shred you and your sister into chum, but my 'superior officer' wanted me to fetch you in case Silvia's flight was cancelled," said OmegaMorph.

Matt glared. "Kiss my arse, blob boy," he snapped.

"Well, I suppose I can let you swim back," said OmegaMorph, dropping the two of them. Matt glared before going wide eyed as he realized they were still glued. OmegaMorph allowed them to sink deeper than the first time before fishing them back out. "Shall we take another dip? I can do this all day," he said, grinning manically.

"Fine...I'm presuming you're the guy I tore to ribbons?" said Matt, as they were dumped on the deck of the boat OmegaMorph had waiting.

"I'm much harder to destroy than my 'brother' was," said OmegaMorph as he started up the boat's engine, "But I bet you can't piece back together if I returned the favor."

Matt started laughing at that, the droids aiming at him cocking their heads. "Keep on laughing," said OmegaMorph, "You know what's really funny? I LET you pull that little stunt, just for a little more shock when I tarred and sank you."

"No...do you wanna know what's really funny?" giggled Matt.

"What's that?" asked OmegaMorph.

"I only used 10 percent," said Matt, the smile vanishing.

OmegaMorph backed up at that. "SHOOT THEM!" he yelled before he glowed...and popped, his goo shooting over the deck's edge into the sea just as the bot's power cores all overloaded at the same time.

"Still using plasma cored," Matt muttered, dissolving the tar before a snarl got his attention. "That better not be something bad," said Matt.

He turned before a lightning blast hit him in the chest from Chloe before she stopped and grinned a cruel smirk.

"Silvia...you better not have taken control again," groaned Matt, "I went through too much to get rid of you."

"_Little mongrel,"_ said Chloe, in a voice that definitely wasn't hers, the tone sounding older and lower, "_You have an interesting little mind...full of walls that are harder to crack than this one."_

"So you're the tenant-to-be that didn't get approval from the landlord," said Matt mockingly, "You have an actual face that I can spit in?"

"_The mongrel has teeth. Why do you use that peculiar half form? I only use this as she will make a fine emissary to those pitiful humans,"_ said 'Chloe', pacing back and forth, aimlessly blasting the reconstituting OmegaMorph with a thunderstrike that was definitely beyond what Chloe could usually manage as a hybrid...or even as a full dragon.

"Well, honestly, I like the way it looks in a mirror," said Matt, "Besides, thumbs are such a useful feature."

"Of course...send a message to your human pets...their dragons will be part of my flight...and if the humans have any common sense, they will leave these islands...or not. They can always be food for me,"_ said 'Chloe'.

"Those guys are very hard to evict, they've gotten pretty good at keeping invaders away," said Matt, "Especially since the dragons are on their side of their own free will, not something that you can manage."

"Free will is an illusion...one that I will easily shatter...just ask your sister,"_ said 'Chloe' laughing cruelly before taking off.

"Oh no, you're not getting away that easily," said Matt as he got back up.

"You're...not going any-" began OmegaMorph before he exploded again, Matt taking off, back for Berk given that Chloe was already lost in the fog. "Ok...maybe later," groaned OmegaMorph, making a note not to tell Anton about these events.

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Unfortunately, Chloe, or whoever was in control of her body at the time, had managed to give Matt the slip. So when he was flying back to Berk, he was in a really foul temper. He luckily chose to land outside town, coming ahead to inform them. It didn't take long for Matt's team to come to his position. He was in too much of a bad mood to shift back to human form and that probably reflected a bit into his message, hence their promptness.

"Ok boss...what happ-FREEZE!" said Techo, Matt's men all drawing weapons.

"Oh smeg, he's reverted," said NegaMorph, "Whatever you do, don't give him any blood or praising. As a matter of fact, start insulting him to reduce his ego."

"NegaMorph...come here," said Matt icily.

"Oh no, I've nearly been molecularly shredded once this month, I'm not chancing it again," said NegaMorph.

Matt glared and made a 'come here' motion that caused NegaMorph to float forward. "You have 10 seconds to explain the guns before I squash you," Matt said darkly.

"Well, you see to be in a DARK mood. We really don't make your fists BLOODY. You know much CORRUPTIVE anger can be," said NegaMorph, making his emphasizes a bit more obvious than they ought to be. However, NegaMorph then remembered that Matt sucked at charades for a good reason. "Ah, smeg it," muttered NegaMorph, reaching into his fedora and pulling a mirror out. "Ta da...surprise," he said sarcastically as Matt took the mirror and stared in mounting horror

His scale color and horn shape were identical to that of the look the Aztec dragons forced on him. A quick check confirmed his claws and tail spike were also at the same level of sharpness.

"Hey...it's not that bad," said NegaMorph, getting the mirror shoved in his mouth.

"Matt, you haven't been in contact with anything...evil, have you?" asked Chris.

"I met his evil twin," said Matt, dropping NegaMorph.

NegaMorph spat out the mirror and cried, "What?! OmegaMorph's here?!"

"In the flesh...he's exploded though...twice," said Matt, slowly shifting back to human form.

"Ok, so he's not invincible. That's good to know...but I can't face him," said NegaMorph.

"Course you can...otherwise I'll tie you to a torpedo and fire you at him," said Matt.

"Matt, I know I'm not nearly strong enough to fight him," said NegaMorph, "I only want to meet him once: on the day that I destroy him. But I know this is not even close near that day."

"Well tough. You are not sitting this out. I met the neighborhood Red Death. It's used Chloe as a spokesman," said Matt angrily.

"Really? It's that strong a psychic?" asked NegaMorph.

"Telepathically, at least. I don't think it's got any other psychic powers if the kids were accurate," said Matt, "However...it said it was gonna get our dragons."

"Yeah, the kids' dragons have been getting a bit edgier," said Techo, "They won't let the kids ride on them anymore."

"Toothless is alright..." pointed out Hiccup, causing Techo to say "For how long?"

"Well, it was able to free himself of the first Red Death's control," said Hiccup, "But my dad needs to know about this."

"And how are we gonna tell him? 'Hey, we figured out it's another Red Death, but not because the Lynches are half dragon'," said Snotlout exaggeratingly.

"He has a point. We used tech to cause this. We will have to blow our cover to explain it, then its angry mob time," said Chris.

"We can't tell anyone. No offence, Hiccup, but your dad looks like the sort to take the news that we're from space badly...with axes," said Matt.

"So how ARE we supposed to tell him about the Red Death?" asked Hiccup.

"We don't. We blast it before this gets out of...hand," said Matt, stopping as he and NegaMorph heard something, turning to look at the

fog bank. It was a bit hard to tell at first, but the sound of flapping wings was getting closer. And there was definitely a lot more than one pair of wings involved.

Techo turned, pulling some goggles out and peering. "Erm...guys? I don't think we need to worry about telling," he said, weakly.

"It's not a dragon attack, is it?" asked Fishlegs.

"Either that or the dragons took up formation flying while they were gone," said Techo.

"We gotta warn the village," said Hiccup.

"Well, we don't exactly have a warning bell system here," said Chris.

"How about a big horn?" asked Morph before reaching into his stomach and pulling out a huge horn.

"Not enough time, they're coming," said Techo, worried before the first fireballs shot out the fog.

"Then I guess we'll have to slow them down before they reach the village," said Astrid.

"Too late," said Matt, ducking as the first fireball shot down and hit the docks, dragons shooting out of the cloud cover with a familiar hybrid at the head.

"Uh, I know the horde of angry dragons is nothing to disregard, but I think we better deal with Chloe before anyone else spots her," said NegaMorph.

"Ok...fuck cover...guns up!" called Matt, throwing a plasma orb skywards.

"Matt, are you absolutely sure you want to go there?" asked Hiccup.

"The other option's to be eaten!" snapped Matt, before Techo yelled "You should get Toothless n co outta here. Matt's having a little moment, I think."

"Right, the last thing we want is for our dragons to be caught in the dragon king's snare," said Astrid.

"Ok, come on, Starflame, time to go," said Techo, the sounds of the town rousing itself to battle heard in the background.

However, Starflame seemed to be having a little trouble thinking straight. She jumped up in the air as if she was about to take off before shaking her head and landing. Then she started to dash off before stopping and rolling around.

Matt yelled into his comm, not noticing this. "WARDEN! I WANT EVERYTHING IN THE AIR THAT WE HAVE! GEARED FOR AA!" he yelled, before throwing himself aside as a Deadly Nadder shot a hail of spines at him.

"Negative, your judgment has clearly been clouded by your sister's current state," came Warden's reply.

"WARDEN!" snapped Matt before another spine went through his comm unit. "Crap," he muttered.

"Matt, Starflame doesn't look so good," said Morph, "Has she had her shots?"

Matt stopped at that, before a plasma blast shot between him and Morph, Kala snarling before a chuckle was heard above them. _"A Night Fury in my flock...very good..."_ said 'Chloe'.

"Hey! She's my dragon! Get your own!" snapped Matt.

"You know how politically incorrect that statement was?" said NegaMorph.

"Hmm...fine...kill them, my pet," said 'Chloe', Starflame firing a plasma blast into the floor near Morph and Matt, causing it to collapse. The two of them fell down into what appeared to be an old Whispering Death tunnel.

"You know, I think Starflame's mad at you about something. I wonder it was," said Morph before a large rock squished him.

Matt sighed, looking up before Starflame landed in front of him, snarling like a rabid tiger. "Now now...let's be calm," said Matt desperately

Starflame roared before tackling Matt, sending them both rolling down the tunnel.

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Two of Matt's marines however were making sure the kids and their dragons got clear...though it clearly hadn't helped given one now had Stormfly's spines in his chest and the other was smashed against a tree from a throw from Hookfang. Barf had spread a large cloud of green gas all around, making it a lot harder for the troopers to see. Only Toothless seemed unaffected...for now. Still, the other dragons were becoming too much of a handful.

"Hiccup...we gotta leave em..." hissed Techo quietly, peering out of their cover to see Stormfly prowling.

"We can't just leave them for the dragon king," said Hiccup, "Not to mention, I'm not sure how we can get away from them."

Techo pulled a canister out a pocket, twisting its top and tossing the now beeping cylinder out. "Cover your eyes and run when I tap your shoulder. Believe me, you won't hear me," he said before the flashbang went off.

Quite truthfully, Hiccup couldn't hear at all, except for a ringing in his ears. He couldn't even hear the confused roars of the dragons as they staggered about, temporarily blind and deaf. Techo shaking his shoulder and soundlessly yelling something got into his comm to his vision though, pointing at the treeline. Hiccup understood enough of the message to start running towards the treeline.

After a few minutes running, he realized he and Toothless had gone the wrong way...and that with his hearing had also come the ultimate in headaches. "Ok...that wasn't...the smartest plan I've ever followed," winced Hiccup, clutching at his head. A moaning growl of agreement from Toothless was heard at that. "We have to get to the village and tell Dad what's causing all this before the war officially restarts," said Hiccup.

At that, the growl came again, sounding angrier.

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Toothless moaned as he heard the voice. _"Come back to me, little one."_

"No, I'm not going back into tyranny," snapped Toothless.

"You talk like you have a...you...you killed my dear sister," said the voice, rooting through Toothless's memories, focusing on the fateful final battle.

"Was she your sister? I thought your voice sounded similar," said Toothless.

"We were from the same clutch...and you killed her...oh, the things I will do to you once I break your feeble will...maybe you could finish off the meal you began with the child..." laughed the voice.

"I will not be broken that easily!" snapped Toothless, _"I escaped your sister's control, I can keep your claws off my mind."_

"Oh please...it took the loss of a limb to do that," said the voice, amused.

"I'm still stronger than your control," growled Toothless.

"Really? I'll leave you to your thoughts then," said the voice.

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Toothless was so focused on his inward battle that he completely ignored what his body was actually doing. So he was surprised when he suddenly saw that he had Hiccup pinned under his paws. He immediately jumped back, a chill going down his spine. This new 'queen' clearly was sneaky in her tricks. The older one had simply used brute mental force.

"Toothless, that wasn't actually you, was it?" asked Hiccup in a worried tone.

Toothless just backed up at that, hanging his head.

"Toothless, I know you wouldn't hurt me, but that dragon king has to be stopped. If we can take out the Red Death, we can take out this one. But I need to know if you'll be able to face it," said Hiccup.

Toothless paused before nodding, wincing at a chuckle in the back of his mind.

"Ok, now let's go find my dad. If Thornado's still controllable, we'll need his help," said Hiccup.

Toothless nodded, before realizing he hadn't meant too...

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By sheer luck, the chaos of the attack had meant that Matt's little ray gun outburst had gone virtually unnoticed. The dragons were ransacking the village for any edible meat and attacking any Viking that was in their way. However, the last war wasn't so long ago that the Vikings hadn't forgotten how to fight dragons. Needless to say, the new Red Death was having trouble getting momentum going. It wasn't long before it began to realize that it was dealing not with an unprepared fishing village but a well-equipped Viking force...they'd just kept the axes in storage.

And quite to her embarrassment, they had been able to capture several of the dragons with ease, namely the Terrible Terrors, but they've also caught some of the larger dragons.

"Urgh...return, my children. Bring what spoils you have and burn as much as you can as you leave," she commanded, glaring as she felt a poke in her scales, aiming an eye to see that the blob had returned with the iron orbs...taking her blood again.

"Uh, OmegaMorph, I wouldn't draw that much attention to you," said Anton.

"Why not? She's so busy controlling all her dragons she won't notice what's going on-" started OmegaMorph he was suddenly squished under the dragon's foot. "Ok...I concede that point," he rasped from underneath before the dragon lifted its foot, satisfied that the point had been made.

"I did warn you," said Anton as OmegaMorph slithered back, "Look on the bright side; you got the blood sample that we needed."

"Yeah, but who's gonna be the unlucky sap who has to test it?" asked OmegaMorph, "I wouldn't want this essence of psychopath running through me."

"True, you already have enough of your own stuff," said Anton dryly.

"Sirs, we got a problem, it looks like one of the Lyn-urk," began a trooper, running into an interrupting OmegaMorph only to have a slash neatly take his head off.

"OMEGAMORPH! He was mentioning the word 'Lynch'," yelled Anton.

"It's a programmed reflex," protested OmegaMorph.

Anton sighed. "Guards...this is Anton...OmegaMorph did it again...what was the message?" he said into his comm.

"One of the Lynches is coming in with the dragons," said a guard on the comm, "It appears to be the former General Silvia."

"Oh shit...everyone hide!" yelled Anton remembering his last entanglement with her. Even OmegaMorph was a bit intimidated by this news, considering how Silvia blew him up. With unspoken agreement, they dived into cover as dozens upon dozens of dragons flew in, led by a hybrid. The dragon queen turned completely around and opened its mouth wide for the dragons to deposit their offerings.

Anton and OmegaMorph peered out of their cover to see the hybrid land and stand, head hung like a droid on standby. "Ok...did I miss something?" said Anton carefully.

"Now that you mentioned it, she did blast Lynch earlier. But that might be normal sibling interaction," said OmegaMorph.

Anton got up...and kicked OmegaMorph out. "Touch her and see what happens," he called from cover. OmegaMorph gave Anton a disgusted look before walking over to Chloe. A few seconds later, Anton yelled, "NO! DON'T TOUCH HER THERE!" The next few minutes involved a lot of electrocution. It seemed that Chloe, while indeed out of it, had left her electricity on automatic.

OmegaMorph's charred body was eventually hurled back towards Anton. "Do most women act like that or is it mainly just her?" asked OmegaMorph.

"Her mostly...but she didn't blast you consciously, so she's out of it," said Anton thoughtfully.

"You don't think it has anything to do with her royal highness, do you?" asked OmegaMorph.

"Could explain the annoying voice in my head," said Anton, annoyed

"That's not standard for humans?" asked OmegaMorph.

"Nope...but I'm not human and neither is she," said Anton.

"But how can we tell for certain it's the dragon's doing?" asked OmegaMorph.

"Look at her, she's standing like a zombie in front of that thing...watch," said Anton, grabbing a rock and tossing it at the large dragon, Chloe's hand whipping out and snatching the rock out of the air before she continued to stand zombie style.

"Mind controlled by a primitive dragon," said OmegaMorph, "I heard that the Lynch sister's will was weak but that was an understatement."

"Hey, this thing almost got me. Her nanites must be on the blink," said Anton.

"I still find it pretty pathetic," said OmegaMorph.

"She can probably hear you," said Anton, causing OmegaMorph to jump

back.

"Well, on the bright side, we can easily deliver her back to the Emperor along with all the other dragons," said OmegaMorph.

"Be my guest," said Anton, putting some shades on and stepping back

OmegaMorph watched forward and said, "Just you watch. I'll have shackled and ready for transport before you can say-"
BZZZZZZZZZZZZZZT!

Anton grinned as OmegaMorph fell over. "Today's lesson: Might is not always right. You have the brain of every intelligent experiment, use them," Anton laughed

OmegaMorph gave him Anton an annoyed look before saying, "If that Mesozoic leftover does have control over her, then it would be less effort to try and bargain with it, wouldn't it?"

"True, I've got experience, but that dragon's not got the mind of an Avalarian variant. It's a dictator, it's not gonna cooperate. If anything, it's too dangerous even for the B.O.W division. I say we should cut our losses...use N-629's side and calculate how long it would take for it to escape from whatever facility we locked it in," said Anton thoughtfully.

OmegaMorph considered this for a few minutes before saying, "My best guess would be 44 minutes maximum. This is based mainly on the fact that we do not have any off-world facilities large enough to contain it."

"Good enough for me. Vengeance, I need a demo team down here ASAP. We're cutting our losses," said Anton, into his comm before he noticed a growling and remembered that his nanites had never got the mental privacy add-on...meaning held just broadcast his entire plan mentally.

The dragons were all glaring and growling at them, flames flickering in their mouths. "Fall back! FALL BACK!" called Anton, the droid escort, detecting a threat all beginning to fire for all the good it did. The dragons quickly began torching everything in their path and smashing everything that didn't burn. "OMEGAMORPH! GET US BACK TO THE SHIP!" yelled Anton, firing blasts.

"Trying to!" snapped OmegaMorph as he blasted a couple of dragons out of his way, "This would be a lot easier if I didn't have my restraints on!"

"Not a chance. I see two specifics in here. Just shadow tele..." began Anton before an explosion was heard and his vision indicated that they no longer HAD a ship. He stopped before saying "New plan...just teleport us out of here...NOW!" he snapped.

"It's really hard to concentrate!" snapped OmegaMorph as several Zibblebacks chomped him.

Anton snapped before he turned to be face to face with a grey Monstrous Nightmare. "Crap," he muttered before a hail of blue tracer rounds began tearing into the horde from a ledge.

"MOVE IT, YOU USELESS IMPERIAL IDIOTS!" yelled Alicia, her men firing dragonbuster rounds. OmegaMorph would normally have been too proud to accept help from anyone. But the way these dragons were tearing into him, he wanted to get away pretty badly.

The duo made it to the entrance before Anton glared. "When we get back...if we get back, me and the Emperor's scientists are having words about what priority samples are," he growled before grinning. "Let the Lynches deal with this," he added before he and OmegaMorph ran for the tunnel.

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Luckily the gang's longboat had been one of the few to survive the attack and given the rabble rousing Mildew had begun, with Hiccup as 'scapegoat one', Matt had decided the kids needed a quick holiday...that and they'd been the ones to take down a Red Death last time.

"Ok, we need to know every weak point that this dragon has," said Chris, "Anything we can use to beat this thing."

"The noise from banging shields has a -10 effect on its orientation...but we'd need to fly close to its ears to do that. It didn't work out that well last time," said Fishlegs, remembering how it had also disorientated Meatlug.

"Well, we've got some fliers who could do the banging themselves," said Techo.

"But I doubt it's gonna enough to get rid of it," said Wilson, "Slowing it down is fine, but how do we kill it?"

"If it's as big as the kids say, not even the North Star's pulse cannons will hurt it too much...not fast enough before it knocks her out the sky," said Techo gloomily.

"Well, the way me and Toothless did it was first to lure it into the sky and then chase us into a powerdive," said Hiccup, "Once we burned its wings, we shot a fireball into its mouth just before it was about to flame. Then it crashed into the ground and exploded, but I'm not certain this dragon will try to chase us like that."

"Yeah...one bitten, twice shy. It seemed to know about its 'sister's' demise when it used my sister as a microphone," said Matt darkly.

"But we can still try to blow it up," said Chris, "We just need to lob a grenade into its mouth and that should work even better than a fireball."

"Yeah...any volunteers for getting close enough?" said Matt. Quite unsurprisingly, no one stepped forward. The silence was so big that one would have expected a cricket to start chirping at any moment.

"Ok...any other plans?" said Matt.

Techo shrugged "How did you avoid it?"

Matt shrugged and said, "Honestly, it wasn't too much effort. I just started being annoying and it left."

"Nanites...another fun surprise from Atlantis," said Techo with a sigh before he paused, "Hey boss...come here."

Matt gave him a suspicious look and said, "If this involves sticking needles in my head, forget it."

Techo shot his hand out and shoved a needle in Matt's arm at that, drawing some blood. "If your nanites could block her out from anything other than broadcasting...that means I have a potential plan," he said with a grin as Matt yelped.

"Uh, not everyone can be equipped with the full Shar-Ekta package, remember?" said NegaMorph pointedly.

"Doesn't need to be..." said Techo cheerfully, "I could knock together something to make sure that Death thing can't play with their brains."

"Like what? Tin headbands?" asked NegaMorph sarcastically only for him to be thrown up to the ceiling.

"NegaMorph, if you don't have anything productive to say, stop talking," said Matt, clearly annoyed.

"I can use these babies to program some blank medical nanites to do the same...we drop a canister of em in the hive, no more mind control...ever," said Techo cheerfully.

"Wouldn't there be side effects to using the nanites?" asked Chip, "I mean, immunization from mind control is fine, but nanites have a tendency to do things they aren't supposed to."

"Medical nanites don't last long. The worst thing that can happen is that the dragons'll live longer cause they won't be able to get ill," said Techo.

"Ok, but won't Chloe's nanites reject the program upload?" asked Chip, "Shar-Khan nanites and the batches derived from them have very tight security."

"Yeah...we'll have to try something else with her," said Techo grimly

"Killing that dragon would free her anyways," said Wilson, "We'd just have to keep her from frying us before that."

"Great...leaves us with a homicidal killer dragon and her puppet," said Matt gloomily.

"At least with our dragons we'd stand a chance," said Hiccup.

"You mean dragon," said Chris, looking at Toothless who had seemed gloomy since the arrival.

"Well, yes, but once we use that nanite thing on the other dragons, that'll free Stormfly, Meatlug, and the others," said Hiccup.

"In theory, the only other time this was tried ended...badly. Don't worry though, I'm sure I know what they did wrong," said Techo, wilting under the glares.

"There's still a problem of delivering the nanites," said Chip, "I doubt we'd be able to fly over them without being shot down first."

"I'll have to modify one of those tear gas bombs in the base," said Techo

"Getting the bomb there still won't be easy," said Chip, "We'll probably have to do a Trojan Horse routine."

"I doubt that'll work, the canister's the size of me," said Techo, "It's called a bomb for a reason."

"I have something important to point out," called NegaMorph, "This thing's a mind reader as well as a mind controller. Even after we got a plan together, it'll pick the plan out of Matt's head as soon as he gets close." Everyone looked at NegaMorph at that in unspoken indication that sometimes not even Matt knew what went on in Matt's head. "Oh yeah, I forgot. He's a moron," said NegaMorph darkly

"True, but isn't Toothless smart enough to understand all this?" pointed out Chris.

Every mercenary turned to look at Toothless at that with an automatically dark expression. They all had identical opinions on rats...even accidental ones.

"Wait a minute, you said the nanites could keep the dragons from being controlled. Doesn't that mean you can also keep their minds from being read?" asked Hiccup.

"Or we could wrap his head in tin foil," said NegaMorph.

"WE ARE NOT USING TIN FOIL!" yelled Matt before Techo said "No...it'll take hours to program a batch...unless you wanna give him a few of these Atlantean ones. From what I know, they won't last long. They're designed for use in humans. Toothless's immune system would destroy them in a few hours plus we dunno what these would do. Shar nanites are designed with genetic manipulation...you got no idea what I'm talking about, do you?" Techo said gloom.

"You lost me at...what were we talking about again?" asked Tuffnut.

"Ok...this stuff could make Toothless immune to mind control while they last but it could also turn him into a hybrid or make him explode or even poison him. Anything's possible," said Techo.

"Then again, if he doesn't, he'll be a security hazard and won't be able to participate on this mission," said Chip, "And we could use all the advantages we can get."

Techo sighed. "Fine...but I want it done INSIDE the base here we can have security," he said.

"You can stop it if something goes wrong, right?" asked Hiccup.

"EM blasters should do it," said Techo calmly before turning away to talk into his comm, clearly to summon some troopers.

"Are you sure this will work?" asked Astrid.

"Experimentation has a margin for error," said Chip, "I'm calculating that margin is about 15%, though I doubt we'll actually kill him."

"Ok, I know that look. What's the other 85% consist of?" asked Matt

"Like you said, anything could happen, but mutation is the most likely event," said Chip.

"Aw crapski," muttered Matt darkly.

"But like Techo pointed out, it'll only be temporary until Toothless's immune system forces it out," said Chip.

"Yeah...like our life works that way," muttered Matt before saying darkly, "Let's go watch the train wreck."

...

Quite naturally, Lao wanted Toothless's upgrade to be within a controlled environment, so they went to the medical bay. Although Toothless had to take up two beds. He was also growling whenever Techo got close...the giant needle probably didn't help things. Finally Matt lost patience. "Now LOOK! Take your medicine. It's that or that thing out there turns your brain into cream cheese," he snapped.

Toothless still growled, not liking the idea of taking shots. "Ok, time for the distraction," said Chip, "Morph, you're up."

Morph looked at Toothless at that before rolling into a ball and starting to ricochet around the room. Toothless couldn't help but watch Morph bounce around, taking his mind off of Techo approaching with his needle. "Aaaaaand GOTCHA!" yelled Techo, lunging at Toothless and sadly getting tail whipped, proving that Toothless wasn't that easily distracted.

"Ok, so much for distraction," said Matt, "I guess we'll just have to do what we normally do when Weirdwolf refuses to have his shots...DOGPILE!"

Hiccup sighed as Toothless neatly dodged the attempt, ending up with the mercs all piling onto nothing and not even noticing until Matt managed to grab Techo by the foot.

"As entertaining as this is, we have more important things to do today," said Chip, "Hiccup, you think you can persuade Toothless to cooperate?"

Hiccup nodded, walking forward to where Toothless was watching then entertainment. "Toothless...they need to give you that shot."

Otherwise the new Red Death could control you like the other dragons," he said, Toothless looking him in the eye. Toothless growled at the mercenaries. "I know it might hurt, but I think being controlled would hurt more, wouldn't it?" said Hiccup.

Techo walked forward slowly, having finally got out the scrum before saying, "It's better than having that thing turn your free will into cheese."

Toothless gave him an annoyed look, but he laid down on the floor.

Techo nodded, pulling out a syringe gun and loading a vial of silver liquid. "Ok...on three...one...two" he said, injecting Toothless in the shoulder. Toothless snarled at that. "Relax, it's already over. Ok...now we see what it does," said Techo cheerfully, every mercenary diving for cover.

Toothless's shoulder soon started spasming, quickly including the rest of his body.

"This'll be interesting...whose nanites did you use...out of morbid interest." asked Matt, Techo saying "Yours." causing Matt to sweatdrop.

There were nauseating cracks and squelches as Toothless's bones and muscle structure started shifting, a crack sounding every time his spine lifted upwards.

"Techo...explain," said Matt, backing up with everyone else.

"I think the Atlantean nanites are renovating," Techo said nervously.

"What? He's gonna be a full human-dragon hybrid?" asked Chris.

Techo checked the nanite readings and said, "No, not quite. I don't think the nanites have enough power to create a 50/50 hybrid, looks more like 80/20

"So...what...do those spine blades look Avalarian?...TECHO!" said Matt, pausing before snapping Techo's name.

"Ok, maybe it's like 80/10/10," said Techo.

"Just be glad that he's not showing any signs of being part elemental," said Chip.

"Ix-nay," said Matt desperately before the changes seemed to have stopped. For a start, Toothless was a little larger...he also seemed annoyed. The most obvious changes were that he was standing on his hind legs and his front paws looked more like hands, however, he wasn't standing completely upright, most of his upper body leaning forward. He also had spines going down his back and a pair of small horns on his head.

"TECHO, THAT IS NOT NORMAL!" snapped Matt, his eyes glowing.

"Ah, normal's for squares," said Morph.

Every merc in the room yelled "SHUT UP, MORPH!"

"Did you guys just turn my dragon half human?" asked Hiccup.

"Actually, just one-tenth human," said Chip, "We've also added a tenth from another species of dragon."

"That's not helping. I'm gonna EM them. They'll be vulnerable away from the master nanite," said Matt, walking over to a console.

"Uh, Matt, you might not want to use that console," called Chip, "There are a couple of frazzled-"

Matt glared and typed in a command before, briefly, a sadly familiar visage appeared before the console electrocuted him to a toasty crisp. "Techo...come hereâ€|" he rasped icily.

Techo walked over and asked, "Is there a problem boss? Besides the short circuits?"

"Why...was 'HE' on the main screen?" said Matt, shaking with barely controlled rage.

Talia sighed at that. "I thought we left him behind," she said.

Chip looked at the screen and said, "That? I thought that was a corrupted VI. I've been trying to purge it for weeks."

"So now we know who fed him," said Talia, glaring down at Chip who wisely retracted into his body

"I'm gonna regret this in a few seconds, but what are you guys talking about?" asked Chris.

"You ever hear about 'Operation: Loose Ends'? That op to find Kurata's remaining help?" said Techo, gloomily.

Chris nodded. "Yeah...poor team ran into all kinda trouble...oh...you were that team," he said, sweatdropping.

"As much as I'd like to tell how you how much grief me and Chloe had to go through, that's not quite as important as to who tagged along after that mission," said Matt.

"I couldn't leave the little guy..." said Techo.

Matt snapping "So you got sentimental?"

Techo shook his head, "No, I just imagined the damage he could do."

"Couldn't you have found someone to take care of him?" asked Talia, "Someone who's clearly better at training than you are?"

"Yeah...let's give a NSC augmented super creature to someone with no knowledge of our tech," said Techo sarcastically, tapping on a computer screen, "We're rumbled Mac...c'mon out."

Snotlout said "What are you all talking about?" before a flash of light came from an intercom behind him and someone yelled "YOU MAH FRIENDZ!"

The kids gave out quite a few screams, some rather high-pitched, at the sudden appearance of a floating pink and blue...something.

The thing hovered up to Toothless before cocking its head and latching onto one of his new horns, making 'nom nom' noises. "I see Mac hasn't changed," said Matt, head hung.

"What is that thing?" asked Astrid.

"Hmm, how do explain something so technical to a race that hasn't discovered electricity yet?" muttered Techo.

"It's a magic birdie!" said Morph promptly.

Everyone turned to look at Morph, before the mercs all considered their options. "Yes...that is correct." said Matt carefully, Mac yelling "AH'M A PRETTY BIRD!"

"So, is this bird going to be of any use to us in getting our dragons or is it just here to be annoying?" said Snotlout.

"Little from column a...and...Mac, make a door please," said Techo, Mac's eyes flashing red "Yes, my master." it said in a mechanical voice before sending a ball of lightning into the wall.

"Well, I suppose that would be helpful in fighting the dragon queen," said Fishlegs.

Talia was sighing. "I recommend we all leave the room before Matt's brain re-engages and he tries to kill us all," she said, pointing to where Matt was staring in horror, with pinpricks for eyes at the brand new hole.

The others quickly started heading for the door. Toothless seemed to prefer walking on four legs than doing so as a biped. A second later, a bloodcurdling scream echoed out.

...

After Matt had calmed down and finished hitting Techo with Mac, the group had settled down to take a closer look at Toothless. "The scales are definitely Avalarian quality...increased muscle mass...detecting a charge of magi too..." Techo groaned, his head bandaged...and not helped that Mac was sitting there.

"How much has it affected his mind?" asked Chip, "I don't think his personality's altered or he'd probably be blasting us."

"Nothing, he may need to learn to fly steady, but nothing major," said Techo.

"Flying might be a problem, considering Hiccup won't fit on his back so easily now," said Chip.

"Avalarians have perfect balance," said Matt, icily, adding "Trust me on this."

"It's more than likely that his firepower's been increased. Probably can do more than just spit bursts of plasma now," said Techo.

"TEST RUN!" yelled Matt, grabbing Mac with an evil grin and running outside.

...

Mac's similarity to a bird made it seem quite natural to use him as a clay pigeon, though covering him with actual clay might have been a bit much.

A plasma blast...and it WAS a blast, worthy of the old North Star's plasma cannon, shattered the crystal, leaving Max scorched. "YAY! I'M A BARBEQUE!" he screamed, causing Toothless to cock his head in confusion.

"Ok, his plasma blast has improved quite a bit," said Hiccup.

"I'd be more impressed if he could utilize some Avalarian abilities," said Chip.

"Like what?" asked Hiccup.

"Mac...pull!" called Chip.

"Yes, weird tin can," said Mac, in duty mode before shooting skyward before several plasma blasts shot past it, turning into boomerang shapes, and spinning round to hit Mac.

"Whoa, I didn't think he'd be able to do stuff like that," said Hiccup.

"Avalarian dragons are very different from the dragons here," said Chip.

A humanoid dragon landed, shimmering back into Matt's form. "We can control our elements alot more accurately," he said, making a plasma flame appear on his finger to demonstrate.

"Wow, is Toothless going to be like that forever now?" asked Hiccup.

"Nope...without a control nanite supplying orders, the injection'll wear off in a day or two," said Techo.

Mac said, "Hey...if dat's all temporary and such...shouldn't we find the nasty psychic dragon lady?"

"He has a point," said Chip, "Practicing his temporary powers so he'll know how to use them is fine, but we need to find that dragon before she sends her army back."

"I'm more frightened that Mac made a good idea," said Techo.

Mac nodded. "I know, I'm scared too," he said, cowering behind Techo.

"Ok, we get it, can we move on now?" asked Chip.

"You ready, Toothless?" asked Hiccup. Toothless roared in response.

"Odd that the nanites didn't give him the ability to talk," said Chip.

"Limited, the nanites'll know they're on borrowed time, why waste energy on cosmetics?" said Techo, before flapping angrily at Mac who laughed like a psychopath, causing Hiccup and co to back up.

"Don't worry, he's always like that. He laughs at anythingâ€|watch," said Matt gloomily, leaning towards Mac and saying "Cheese." causing Mac's laughter to become even more manic.

"Ok, guys, let's get everything we need and head out," said Hiccup, "Remember, we're only going to slay the new Red Death, so we'll be taking mostly nets and shields."

"Aw...you're taking all the fun out of a raid," moaned Tuffnut.

"Erm...space people with death rays over here," said Techo sarcastically and waving.

"Death rays set to stun," said Matt sternly, "Only the big one is going down. Everything else needs to be knocked out, especially my sister."

"I was trying to point out that nets are kinda low tech compared to what we can do," said Techo, Mac saying "But we need them to catch the angry monkey."

Matt glared at Mac and said, "That had better not be a reference to Chloe."

Mac said happily "She's the angriest monkey at the ball." oblivious to Matt igniting a plasma ball.

...

The Red Death meanwhile was...interrogating the hybrid she had enthralled. It was clearly not from this world and she needed to know what trouble her flight might cause. Having her tell her what she was facing wasn't making very much sense to her. So she had decided to peer directly into her memories.

What she saw was a race that had turned combat into almost a perfect art. She also saw that her flight was currently vulnerable, cut off from their resources that were seen in her servitor's memory. One simple attack could remove them...

She had to make sure these offworlders did not report to their superior's offworld. She'll send her most capable dragons to make sure of that.

...

"Ok...first we need to work out where the Red Death's hiding," said Matt, Techo and Mac slumped and smoking, Mac giggling to

itself.

"Don't we have something to lock on Chloe's signal?" asked NegaMorph.

"I doubt it. She'll be reading as a dragon...in a mass of dragons. Needle in a haystack," said Chris.

"Then search for where's there's a mass of dragons," said NegaMorph, "That'll be a good place to start looking."

On cue, every light in the room went red. "Alert...perimeter violation. Multiple airborne contacts approaching on heading 2 mark 17," said the computer.

"Such as the mass of dragons coming here?" asked Chris dryly.

"Psi-sensors confirms hostile intent. All personnel to alert status 1," said the computer before the ground shook from an explosion on the surface.

"Uh, did you guys get the auto-defenses operational yet?" asked NegaMorph.

"Automatic defenses at 5% operational status...alert, hostiles have breached battlecruiser launchbay," said the computer calmly.

...

The launchbay was where Hiccup and Toothless were practicing their teamwork and flying with Toothless's new form.

"I think we're getting it," said Hiccup, the two circling the bay, using the ship occupying it as an obstacle. Toothless made an affirmative sound.

At that, the lights in the bay began flashing red, several faint announcements heard from outside the bay. "That doesn't sound good," said Hiccup.

The huge bay doors at the far end were beginning to glow, Toothless stopping into a hover as he heard a familiar voice in his head, though now it was just that, a voice. _"You again...acting like a common mule ferrying that human."_

"I don't answer to you," growled Toothless.

"You think? Throw that human off...I SAID THROW THE HUMAN!" said the voice, shouting when it sensed not even a twitch.

"Like I said, you can't tell me what to do you now," said Toothless smugly.

The voice was silent before sneering. _"My favorite minion's memories seem to indicate that all I have to do...is wait...but I'm not in that sort of mood. You can die with the human,"_ said the voice at the same time that the main doors got a hole blown in them.

Hiccup and Toothless turn to see a few Gronkles were forcing their way in.

The alarms got more urgent at that, the far doors opening as some of Matt's men ran in. Toothless and Hiccup however spotted the hybrid flying in with several other familiar dragons. "Kill them all," she said in a zombie-like tone.

"Remember Toothless, we're only going to capture them," said Hiccup.

Toothless nodded, swinging around to charge Chloe, who whipped her head round and easily dodged aside. "Amateur," she said icily, spitting a blast of lightning. However, Toothless has had practice in dodging lightning strikes and dodged around the blast. "Maybe you need a lesson?" sneered Chloe, eyes glowing before almost every power conduit in the bay blew out, the collective energy shooting out. Not even Toothless could dodged that and he ended up being zapped on multiple sides.

Chloe just laughed like a lunatic, readying another blast before a plasma ball slammed into her and smashed her back out the door, a blue scaled blur shooting out after her.

"You alright, bud?" asked Hiccup to Toothless. Toothless nodded before he dodged a hail of spikes from a Deadly Nadder.

The regular dragons seemed to be set on following the hybrid's orders, but Matt's men have had a lot of experience with fire fights. They had, after all, had plenty of practice. Many of the remaining troopers were veterans of the Banshee Cannon incident, or were Black 13, who had trained with bashing the Lynches in mind. Not to mention large obvious projectiles like lava balls and spikes were easy to dodge for them.

One by one, the dragons with Chloe were being caught in web-nets or tazered with tesla rifles. Chloe had proved herself harder to hit, as had the dragons she had as underlings. Those dragons were the best trained of the dragons, namely the ones that the kids had ridden.

Toothless winced as Hookfang sent several of Matt's men scrambling for cover while Stormfly pinned several down...literally with her spikes. It was a miracle nobody was dead yet. A crack of thunder from outside, coupled with an explosion however reminded Toothless that the most dangerous one was still outside.

...

This wasn't the first time Matt had to deal with Chloe's rampages, but typically they were Silvia's fault.

This time however, he was dealing with his sister properly...or at least something using her like a remote control toy. "Get out of my sister, you brain frying gecko. You're probably fat too," he taunted, keeping out of range.

"_And give up the jewel of my collection? I think not,"_ said 'Chloe' before letting out another thunderbolt.

Matt fainted to the side, avoiding the brunt of the blast. "You let her go or you WILL die. The others are talking about just catching you...but I'll just destroy you till nobody even remembers what you were," he growled

"You will not kill me, not if you are risk losing something precious," said 'Chloe'.

"You misunderstand. I've fought my sister before...and I always got away. I'm talking about coming to you," hissed Matt, before noticing Chloe had vanished into the clouds.

"I know that you plan to come after me, but you do not know what you will lose if I die," said 'Chloe's' voice, not from any particular direction.

"It didn't bother the dragons when your relative got blown up from the inside." taunted Matt

"She didn't have the knowledge I had, one that you would find very precious," said 'Chloe's' voice.

"It's not worth it if you're running around like a demonic pied piper," said Matt angrily, his vision catching a shadow in the cloud, Matt sending a wave of energy its way. The energy wave hit the shadow, causing it to drop.

Matt smirked, flying out and holding out his arms in a mocking gesture to catch the figure. However, as soon as he got close, a bolt of lightning hit him dead center in his chest. With that he was sent down into the ice below, cracking it. "Ok...ouch," he groaned weakly

'Chloe' dropped down beside him and said, _"Now that you're not about to fight back, I can offer you my deal: lay down your weapons, all of them, and swear your loyalty to me and I shall tell you a very precious secret."_

"And what 'secret' is 'precious' enough to be worth that?" asked Matt.

'Chloe' smirked and said, _"The location of your mate."_

Matt's eyes narrowed before he sensed something behind Chloe. "I have one word to say," he said, concentrating and a hatch behind and below Chloe silently slid open.

"Would that word be 'agreed'?" asked 'Chloe'.

"Fire," said Matt, before the plasma array under Chloe spat a green beam that engulfed her. The blast sent Chloe flying upwards, Matt quickly losing sight of her among the clouds. "Happy landings, slimy!" he yelled angrily before he realized what he did. "I hope this is 'amnesia' mind control," he whimpered.

Just then, Mac flew up in front of Matt and said, "Is the lizard man feeling ok?"

Matt thought for a second. "Mac, if Chloe asks who shot her with the plasma beam, you did it," he said after a minute

"Okey-dokey," said Mac before looking at Matt and saying, "You don't look ok."

"No, I'm not...I fear that my sister will want to remove my spine and throttle me with it later on," Matt said.

"You need a pick-me-up," said Mac before his beak started glowing pink before a pink beam shone out over Matt's chest, causing pink sparkles to go across his body.

Matt winced at that before he noticed that his feeling of exhaustion...oh and the searing pain from his high speed meeting with the ground were gone. "Good little psycho...uh oh, incoming," Matt said, patting Mac on the head before seeing another dragon divebombing at him. Mac turned around to look, only to be sent off spinning and burning into the distance.

Matt had hopped back to see Starflame in an attack position. "Wondered where you went," he muttered. Starflame snarled at Matt, baring all of her fangs. "I suppose I can't count on our bond as rider and dragon to get through to you, can I?" asked Matt.

The dragoness spat a plasma ball that Matt deflected with a slap of his hand. "I guess not...goodnight," Matt said, sending a blast of energy at her. The blast sent Starflame flying off the ice and into the sea. "Hmm...maybe too much..." said Matt with a wince before looking impressed as Starflame shot out the sea and came back, if anything looking angrier. "Really?" he said.

Starflame shot several plasma blasts which Matt simply shielded himself against. "Now look, I don't want to do anything permanent to you," snapped Matt before a blast hit him in the face and caused him to backflip. "But now I am," Matt snapped getting back up and sending a blast of energy that sent Starflame into an ice wall.

"Now be a good dragon and stay down until I can get you your vaccination against mind control-itis," said Matt. The dragoness tried again to get up before Matt blasted the wall and made a lump of ice brain her. "Now stay down before I have to get rougher," said Matt.

Starflame groaned before passing out. "Ok...all teams...is anything happ..." he began before another bolt of lightning hit him. "Ow..." groaned Matt before falling over.

...

The battle hadn't been too bad. Once Chloe had left, alot of the dragons had partially snapped out of it...though they weren't happy to be caught in traps. Still, no one was taking any chances until the nanites have been administrated.

That quickly became a problem when they tried to take blood and got a burnt nub of a needle. It turned out Matt's nanites had turned defensive. However, Techo had time to find the anti-mind control part of the nanites and was duplicating that with medical nanites.

"You sure this'll work? Atlantean tech's sneaky," said Matt, as Techo prepared to inject Meatlug.

"Would you rather have to deal with fires until that tyrant lizard's gone?" asked Techo.

"Good point...proceed," whimpered Matt.

Techo quickly inserted the needle into a soft spot in Meatlug's scaly armor, though the dragon did try to struggle. "All done...that's everyone...and nobody's turned Avalarian or exploded...makes a change," said Techo, causing the dragons to back up a step

"Great, but how are we supposed to get this stuff to every other dragon?" asked Chris.

"We...can't. We'll have to take out the controller. We simply don't have enough nanites." said Techo.

"Then let's stop wasting time," said Matt, "Get those kids on their dragons. We'll need to attack this thing from as many angles as we can."

...

"They're coming..."_ muttered the Red Death to herself, sensing as her minions' connections were cut off one by one. These off-worlders were a greater threat than she had thought. Not only did they have the weapons to oppose her, but they also had the means of severing her control over her servants.

The Red Death however didn't feel concern. She knew she was one of the largest dragons in existence and that usually added up to a planet sized amount of self-confidence. She knew that the off-worlders were coming to attack her. She shall destroy them when they arrive. If any are left, they'll know what it means to defy her.

...

Matt and the kids flew through the clouds, the North Star following closely. "We gotta be close. Chloe always leaves thunderclouds when she's pissed," Matt called, pointing to a black cloud lit up with flashes.

"So, do you have idea of how to ground her before we get zapped?" asked Snotlout.

"Get her to chase me. I've been zapped quite a few times," said Matt, the group flying forward before he heard Techo in his earpiece. "Ok...we got a large cluster of signals straight ahead...looks like we're here...MAC, DON'T EAT-" bzzzt. Matt sighed to himself at that.

"The Red Death's bound to come after us eventually," said Astrid, "What will we do then?"

"We let the North Star blow a 6 foot hole through it," said Matt darkly as the clouds cleared up to show an island that the dragons and kids knew.

"That's the island where the first Red Death lived," said

Hiccup.

"Oh joy...she organized a homecoming," said Matt, darkly.

"I guess the apple doesn't fall far from the tree with those dragons," said Astrid.

"I can't see any way in...and I think making ourselves flush against the sky by coming in via the crater might be a way to get shot to pieces," said Matt, looking down at the volcano before saying "North Star...could you make us a door please?" before he turned to the other making 'move aside' motions.

"Don't we want to take this thing by surprise?" asked Fishlegs.

"Believe me...this'll be a surprise," said Matt before a solid blue beam as thick as a longboat lanced out of the smoke, into the mountain and judging by the glow, out the other side. "KNOCK KNOCK, SLIMY!" yelled Matt.

Immediately, many dragons flew out of the mountain in apparent panic. Matt shot forward, leaving the others. "Matt, wait, you don't know what you're dealing with!" Hiccup called.

"I've seen enough of its personality to know it won't play nice," called Matt. He flew to a hover, shifting to his hybrid form as Chloe landed neatly on the rim of the hole, the top of her head smoking where the lance cannon had glanced her. "Hey sis, feeling more like yourself?" asked Matt, not expecting a good answer.

"My mistress is angry," said Chloe in a dull voice as the ground started to shake.

"I don't consider my day complete until I make the local bad guy's blood pressure rise," said Matt.

He stopped as some...thing huge, easily bigger than the North Star, began to move inside the cave, easily pushing its way forward.

"Prepare," said Chloe dully before her eyes rolled into her head and she fell forward. Matt quickly rushed forward to catch his sister. He grabbed her just in time as a draconic face bigger than a small house burst through, snapping at where she had been.

...

"What the fuck is that?" yelled Techo, the bridge crew trying to hold their balance.

"I don't care...shoot it!" yelled Chris. The North Star's main cannon let out another blast that should have atomized the dragon, but it only left a scorch down its side.

"Bloody Nora...helm, hard to starboard," said Techo before the dragon clamped down on the ship's left engine, shaking it around before tearing it off.

Mac happily screamed "YAY...WE'RE GONNA EXPLODE!" as the ship spiraled down to slam into the side of the volcano.

"We're gonna need a bigger ship," said Morph causing everyone to yell, "SHUT UP, MORPH!"

...

Matt stared in morbid horror as the Red Death tossed his ship down to the ground before crunching up and spitting out the engine in its mouth. "My shipâ€|" he said in a tiny voice

The Red Death's voice boomed in Matt's head, a lot louder than it had been before. _"Do you see? Not even your flying ships are capable of stopping me."_

Something in Matt went snap at that. "I'll tear your heart out!" he roared, his eyes going white and what looked like glowing cracks appearing around them. However, as Matt was rushing at the Red Death, it opened its mouth wide and let out a firestorm of destruction at him.

The kids winced as Matt was sent flying back into the volcano. "Ok, so what do we do now?" asked Fishlegs.

"We keep her distracted until Matt gets back up," said Hiccup, "I hope the others will be able to help out."

The Red Death turned to growl at that, all of its eyes narrowing in recognition. _"Traitorsâ€|"_ it hissed in the dragons' heads.

"I hope we can get a better plan soon," said Snotlout. The Red Death was ahead of them, spitting a column of flame in their direction.

"Ruffnut, Tuffnut, see if you can bash your shields by its ears," called Hiccup, "That might buy us some time."

Ruffnut muttered "Cause that worked so well last time."

"Guys, we really need to keep this thing occupied," called Astrid, Stormfly flying out of the way to avoid being crunched by the Red Death.

On cue a cluster of blue blasts shot into the Red Death's side, a blue blur shooting out to impact off its side.

"Whoa, what was that?" asked Ruffnut.

"Hopefully not the volcano erupting," said Hiccup.

The Red Death turned slowly to face the newcomer, what looked like a dragon shape made of light which, as it watched, spat another cluster of plasma blasts with a hissing banshee shriek.

"Is that Matt?" asked Astrid.

"I didn't know he could do that," said Fishlegs.

"Whatever it is, it's giving us an opening," said Snotlout, "I say we start blasting that big creep as hard as we can."

The dragons nodded, spitting their own shots at the Red Death,

causing it to roar angrily...then in pain when Toothless added a rather impressive version of his own plasma bolt.

"Guys, I should point out that every part of its hide is thickly armored," called Fishlegs.

"Then don't aim at the armor, aim at the soft spots: the wings, the eyes, the nostrils," called Astrid.

"Especially the mouth," added Hiccup.

Toothless was about to do that before a plasma bolt shot past him, an angry hiss from Matt. "Uh, does this remind anyone of anything?" asked Fishlegs.

"Kinda reminds me of that time I saw a Terrible Terror swallow a bunch of coal and it all went off in its stomach," said Tuffnut.

"I think he meant how Matt wants to fight the Red Death like how Toothless wanted to fight the Whispering Death," said Hiccup.

"Oh...no, can't see that," said Tuffnut.

A plasma blast shot past at that, indicating that Matt was more in a 'kill anything that wasn't him' mood. A laser blast from the ground attracted Matt's murderous attention away at that, Techo waving from below and yelling "We'll handle the boss...you get the ugly one."

"And how are we supposed to get it?" asked Snotlout.

"Attack it from different angles," said Hiccup, "Get it frustrated."

Ruffnut and Tuffnut nodded, immediately steering their dragon over.

"Hey, you should be lucky there isn't a big enough mirror in the world for you to look at yourself in!" shouted Ruffnut.

"Yeah, because you're so fat and ugly!" yelled Tuffnut.

The Red Death growled before snorting and turning its attention to Toothless who was trying an attack run, spitting some flame to cause him to peel off. "This isn't working...it knows how we beat the last one," Astrid muttered before looking down at where Matt was fighting his crew to see Techo's pet floating erratically. "Hm" she said, before she and Stormfly swooped down...

Mac looked up and said, "There's a chicken lizard coming."

"Kinda busy here, Mac," said Techo.

A whoosh was heard, Techo looking back to see Mac had vanished, shrugging and turning back to the problem at hand...a homicidal boss.

...

"YAY! FIELD TRIP!" screamed Mac, stuck in Stormfly's claws.

"Yeah, if this doesn't do it..." said Astrid to herself, wincing as Mac screamed "Can we get burrito's?"

"It has to work, nothing else could be more annoying than this," she said, very sure of herself about this.

...

The Red Death sighed to itself as the humans made another attempt to annoy her into a mistake before it noticed a high pitched voice getting louder, sounding like "Taaaacooooooooo." before something small landed on its nose. The Red Death's eyes focused on the pink and blue thing holding on to its nose. It shook its head around to remove it, but it was clinging on tight.

"YOU A CHUBBY LADY!" it shrilled causing the Red Death to pause. Any female of any species, even on worlds where the dominant species were small intelligent blobs hated being called fat. It was in the universal laws of survival for males anywhere and the Red Death was no exception.

The Red Death roared before shooting fire out its nostrils in an attempt to incinerate the pest. "YAY...AH'M GONNA MAKE MARSHMALLOWS!" screamed the annoyance, the blast having missed it.

The Red Death roared more angrily, not only because of the parasite on her nose, but her nostrils were singed from the blast. The parasite seemed to think this was some kinda game before it spat its own little flamethrower in her face, causing her to roar before Toothless managed to blast her in the side, the parasite flying out and landing between Toothless's head horns. "That was fun...let's do it again!" it exclaimed

"Uh, sure, why don't you start?" said Hiccup.

Mac, the 'parasite' in question nodded before flying back to land next to the red deaths ear and screaming "WE WISH YOU A MERRY JINGLY, WE WISH YOU A MERRY JINGLY WE WISH YOOOOOOOOOU...!" before the Red Death lost its last remaining ounce of self-control and swung its head side to side, sending Mac flying.

"Ok, I think the Red Death is sufficiently infuriated enough," said Hiccup.

The Red Death confirmed this by sending a blast of fire into the air. _"YOU WISH FOR A BATTLE? I WILL GIVE ONE...JUST KEEP THAT FREAK AWAY!"_ it roared in the dragons' heads.

"Ok, so now that it's all fired up, now what?" asked Tuffnut.

"We need to get a fireball into its mouth. That's how me and Toothless defeated the first one," called Hiccup, the dragons circling to avoid the furious Red Death

"No problem, me and Hookfang will-" started Snotlout before he and Hookfang were swatted aside by one of the Red Death's swipes. Hiccup and Toothless winced as Hookfang and Snotlout were sent down to an uncomfortable swim before a crack of thunder came from the mountain

and a bright yellow dragoness flew out, turning to head their way.

"You think Chloe's broken free of the Red Death's control?" asked Astrid.

"I wouldn't count on it," said Hiccup.

On cue several blasts of electricity shot past them, Chloe turning around to launch another attack before an energy bolt shot into her side, Matt, having finished beating the snot out of his crew turning on her, though the kids couldn't help but notice that he was pulling his punches.

"Should we worry about them destroying each other?" asked Fishlegs.

"Nah, they're gonna knock each other around for a while, but when one of them gets too tired, they'll stop," said Ruffnut. The others gave her a bewildered look. "What? That's what me and Tuffnut do," she said.

...

Chloe span to avoid several plasma bolts from Matt who was attempting to force her down before she heard the Red Death snap "_Stop toying with it."_ The pain was enough to make Chloe miss a flap and start dropping down.

She got her wing balance in time for something that felt searing hot to tackle her. She looked up to see a glowing dragon growling at her, smoke coming up from where it made contact before it released her, letting her momentum carry her into the ground.

The pain that went through the link was so strong that the Red Death quickly withdrew from Chloe's mind, not that she conscious enough to take advantage of it. She glared as he shot upwards like an angry tiny comet before she tried another connection. "_If you destroy me, you will never find your mate,"_ she said before recoiling in horror. That wasn't a dragon mind.

"You have nothing to offer me, tiny creature," came the echoing reply.

The Red Death opened her mouth wide to engulf him in a raging inferno, knowing that he was too dangerous to keep existing. What she received was a searing pain down her throat, shutting her mouth and tail slamming him when she realized what the...thing had done. A glancing blow into her mouth. Luckily she hadn't opened her fire ducts yet and as such the blast hadn't blown her apart.

However, his heat was more than enough to reach through the thick scales on her tail and burn the flesh underneath. She noticed however that his glowing was flickering, revealing scales that were rapidly cooling from the touch before re-igniting. The Red Death then smirked inwardly before sending a gust of wind at Matt, sending him spinning head over tail into the sea and sending a cloud of steam up.

Now that he was doused, it was time to focus on the traitors. With that she turned and received a hail of fireballs to her face. "_You

are all starting to annoy,"_ she snarled inwardly.

"We're not stopping any time soon," said Toothless.

"Then die..." growled the Red Death.

...

"Ah caught an angry fishy!" called Mac, dragging a half-drowned Matt out of the surf as the battle raged above.

Matt coughed up the seawater that he had breathed in. He was feeling pretty crumby about now, not only from the throbbing pain of going between human, dragon, and elemental forms, but all of the battle damage he had gotten from the fight was catching up to him.

"Welcome back to sanity...what the hell was that?" snapped Techo, helping Matt up and wincing as he saw Matt's prosthetic which looked like melted wax.

"I think...that was what Kala went through...before..." started Matt.

"Aw great," moaned Techo before an explosion above was heard, "We gotta get under cover before something lands on us. The North Star's toast, mate...sorry."

Matt groaned and said, "What more can we lose?"

"Our lives?" said Techo sarcastically before Matt said, a little slurred "I'm going back up there."

"You're no condition to be walking, let alone flying," said Techo.

"Who made you team medic?" retorted Matt.

"I did when the medic in charge died in the crash," snapped Techo before poking Matt's fake arm, "Plus, you broke that."

"It's just a mesh wound," said Matt a bit incoherently.

"Yeah...lets go back to the wreckage," said Matt before stopping as Matt pushed him back.

"I'm going up...oh hi si-" he said, turning to greet Chloe who proceeded to knock him out.

"Ok...I feel better now," she said in an icy tone.

"I hope that's the real Chloe talking because I don't want to deal with lightning blasts right now," said Techo.

"Help me drag him back...then find me the biggest grenade we have," said Chloe.

"That's enough like the real Chloe for me," said Techo before grabbing Matt.

...

"But I wanna help," groaned Matt from where he'd been tied down, Chloe wincing at where the destroyed cyber arm should be.

"Ok, I got a good look in her memory. Her scales are like planet cracker armor, but if we get a shot into her mouth..." she explained.

"Hiccup brought that up before," said Techo, "Those kids have been trying to get a clear shot at her maw for a while now."

"Then let's make this thing scream. Morph, Mac, could you make that thing scream in incoherent rage?" Chloe asked.

"I can do that all by myself," said Morph boastfully.

"Tough, Mac's going as backup," said Chloe in a final voice, before wincing, grabbing a combat helmet and shoving it over her head, not helping that she was trapped in hybrid form.

"That thing still has a claw in your head?" asked Techo.

"It's trying...least the helmet's got a psi-cover in it," said Chloe, with a relieved sigh.

"Ok, you two, drive that mind-controller out of her mind," said Techo.

Mac saluted. "Yes, my master," he said a little urgently, before tossing Morph on his back and rocketing up through the roof, regardless of the plating in the way.

Techo looked at the hole they left and said, "You know, I wonder if perhaps I may have just unleashed a bit too much madness against that thing."

"Just be ready. I want a nice clear shot down that thing's throat," snapped Chloe.

...

The Red Death growled and attempted to swat the Gronkle traitor out the sky when it felt something land on its snout, focusing to see the annoying parasite...and some kind of blob. The Red Death immediately tried to scrape the two of them off, but they kept dodging her claws.

"AH MADE MASHED POTATOES!" screamed Mac, using the replication software that it had as its first ever meal to literally barf the aforementioned food out and into the Red Death's left eye cluster

The Red Death tried to rub the stuff out of its eyes while the blob hopped over to the other eye cluster. "You know what really goes well with mashed potatoes? LEMON JUICE!" he yelled before emptying a bottle of it into her eyes.

The Red Death roared angrily, roaring more as Stormfly spat some flame into her side. "Aw...the lizard lady's all sad," said Mac sadly before spitting an ice blast.

"She needs a makeover," said Morph before pulling out a giant tube of lipstick.

The kids had actually stopped briefly to watch Mac and Morph drive the Red Death's blood pressure up before it began roaring angrily. "They're giving us a chance," called Hiccup

"Great, except getting at her mouth is gonna be harder," said Astrid as the Red Death kept snapping at Mac and Morph.

"MORPH...TRY AND GET HER TO HOLD STILL!" called Hiccup as Mac and Morph continued to torment the huge dragon. However, the two nuisances didn't hear Hiccup. Mostly because they were too busy with driving the Red Death nuts, but her roaring drowned out almost everything anyways. "We'll have to try." called Hiccup, Toothless nodding and starting a dive and preparing a plasma bolt.

However, the Red Death had turned by that point and Hiccup and Toothless had to turn away. The Red Death roared angrily as it was turned around again and a plasma bolt impacted on its side, Toothless peeling off again. It growled before sensing something...the mental wall in the Night Fury was cracking. The living metal in the Night Fury's body was starting to lose its strength. It wouldn't be long before it reverted back to its original form, but his mind will become vulnerable before that happens.

"That's it...give in...much easier..." said the Red Death, sensing his worry before yelping in annoyance as Mac bit one of her head spikes.

"Naughty, naughty, talking to someone else while we're playing," said Mac.

It was enough for Toothless to spit a plasma ball at the Red Death, though the transmitted pain blurred his vision. The Red Death poured as much mental focus as she could at the widening cracks in the Night Fury's mental shield. As soon as she gained control of him, she would have him destroy the other traitors easily and eliminate the worst of her problems.

...

"Range...2000 meters," called a crewman.

Chloe nodded. "Load up the nastiest ammo we have. Nobody pokes around in my head except ME!" she snapped.

"Waiting for shot order," said Techo, he, Matt and Wilson having hid behind a console at that little outburst.

"Don't waste this shot. Wait for its mouth to be at its widest," said Chloe.

"Aye ma'am," said the gunner, looking through the console scanner.

...

The Red Death roared angrily before finally grabbing Morph and Mac.

"I told you she's a chubby lady," said Mac insanely to Morph.

"All that sleeping and no exercise," said Morph, "She's so out of shape she couldn't catch a fly."

The Red Death snapped at that, throwing them down into the ground before turning her attention back to the Night Fury and its friends. She could feel the Night Fury's defenses starting to buckle. But the sorrow of losing his friends would break him so much quicker.

However, landing hits on them could prove troublesome. That's when she sensed one final little pawn...one other that the Night Fury, rare as he was, wouldn't dare hurt. Relishing in the irony, she started focusing her control on her.

...

Toothless and the others slowly circled, trying to get a good shot in when Toothless finally saw an opening. "Finally," he muttered, preparing a shot before another plasma bolt slammed his chest. The dragons looked up in surprised as Starflame swooped down at them.

"What's she doing?"_ snapped Stormfly, dodging to the side to avoid a shot from her.

"The Red Death,"_ growled Toothless before he heard the creature's mocking voice. "Well? You'll have to kill your own to get to me."_

"Didn't she get the shot?" asked Astrid.

"Obviously not," said Hiccup as Starflame took up position as a literal living shield.

"So what are we supposed to do?" asked Snotlout.

"She can't defend from every side," said Hiccup, "Try to surround her and take her down without hurting her."

Hookfang and Barf and Belch tried to circle Starflame at that, the dragoness apparently not noticing.

"Kala, why are you attacking us?"_ asked Meatlug, "The Red Death is the enemy."_

"SHUT UP, MATT!"_ yelled Starflame, spitting several fireballs at Meatlug.

Meatlug dodged out of the way of the blasts. "Uh, did you hit your head earlier?"_ asked Stormfly, "That's not Matt, that's Meatlug."_

"SHUT UP, MATT! I'LL TEACH YOU TO THINK I'M PLAYING CHARADES!"_ screamed Starflame.

Stormfly barely avoided Starflame's attack and said, "I don't think she's thinking straight."_

"The Red Death must be doing more than controlling her mind, it's manipulating her vision," said Toothless.

A yell of _'SHUT UP!'_ forced Toothless to lazily dodge. _"Hasn't improved her aim though,"_ he said in a dull voice.

By that point, Hookfang and Barf'n'Belch had gotten behind and both of them unleashed their combined attack on her. Starflame however proved sneakier than that, flying up and dopping a spin in the air to come to a hover behind them.

Starflame looked between the two dragons and said, _"Two Matts? That can't be..."_ She cringed as the Red Death tightened its grip on her brain. Sadly this just caused her to start giggling as her brain short circuited.

"That reminds me of Matt," said Belch, who hadn't been really listening to her rant.

"Matt? WHERE?!" snapped Starflame, snapping out of it.

"Can we just blast her now?" asked Barf.

Starflame beat them to it, spitting several blasts at them. The dragons scattered before regrouping. _"We need to finish this before the Red Death joins in,"_ said Toothless. The Red Death itself spat a stream of flame, trying to force the group down to the ground and not even caring when Starflame was singed.

The kids' dragons quickly flew away, but then Hiccup and Toothless noticed that Starflame wasn't getting out of the way so they had to turn back. _"She better not try to attack me for this,"_ grumbled Toothless.

Starflame suddenly whipped her head round to stare at them, one of her eyes a pinprick of pure crazy. _"ANOTHER HALLUCINATION...YAY!"_ she screamed.

"C'mon, bud, we've almost got her," encouraged Hiccup.

As Toothless got closer he could hear Starflame gibbering _"So many Matts...can't be real...all a dream ahahahahahah..."_

"She's almost as crazy as that bird thing," commented Toothless.

Starflame stopped at that. _"Crazy? CRAZY?"_ she said, her eyes narrowing.

"Uh, Toothless, we might want to turn soon," said Hiccup, the Red Death's flames getting closer.

"I think you're right," said Toothless in his dragon tongue, sensing that Kala was getting more focused.

Toothless then settled for saying in a pretty unconvincing impression, _"Yes...I am Matt...erm...I'm stupid..."_ which caused Kala/Starflame's eye to twitch with an actual auditable snap before she lunged at him. Toothless didn't need any encouragement to turn tail, not that Hiccup had enough time to realize what was going

on.

The Red Death looked confused at that, as to why her minion had suddenly started ignoring her. When she tried to contact her mind, all she got was _"STAY OUT OF THIS! This is between me and the ignoramus!"_ It was probably the first time ever that a Red Death would back up. Some things even island sized dragonesses had the sense to stay out of.

But the Red Death soon realized that Toothless would be too preoccupied with escaping the mad Starflame to protect his mind and so started hammering at his defenses again. It quickly got a reaction as Toothless stopped in midair, Starflame stopping in surprise. _"Much easier...now throw that...what's this?"_ the Red Death said pleased, before noticing a recent memory...about the metal creature she had destroyed. The metal creature wasn't really alive; it was a ship on which there were several more offworlders...with weapons that might be able to harm her.

She turned in horror, to fry it, opening her mouth...

...

"We have a clear shot!" called a tech.

"WELL? SHOOT IT!" snapped Chloe.

...

The dual pulse turret on the North Star let out a deafening boom at that, sending two glowing spheres skywards. As the Red Death was about to let out her flames, the spheres shot into her mouth which had already been gassing up for the attack.

"Oh...no," thought the Red Death, her last thought it turned out as the shells exploded, setting off every inch of gas as well. Her body glowed with internal life for a moment before it completely combusted, creating a huge fireball in the sky and a boom that could be heard for leagues in every direction. Toothless and the other dragons quickly snapped out of it, as well as the dragons that had been hiding from the fight.

Kala was also freed, but she was still carrying a bit too much genuine anger. _"Impersonate Matt, would you?"_ she snarled.

"Bud, I think you can stop now. The Red Death is dead," said Hiccup.

"Who cares about that dragon? It's the one behind me that I'm scared of," said Toothless as he tried to speed away from Kala.

Starflame however was slowing to a halt. _"Hey...how the smeg did I get here?"_ she snapped.

Toothless gave a sigh of relief and said, _"You've been mind-controlled by the Red Death, which is very dead now."_

Starflame looked down at the smoking remnants. _"Did my darling manage that? It looks like his handiwork,"_ she said with what the

dragons worryingly realized was worrying pride.

"Uh, I think he had a big hand in it, not certain what exactly they did,"_ said Toothless.

"They did what they do best...mayhem and destruction,"_ said Kala/Starflame proudly before twitching and starting a chuckle that quickly became a maniacal laugh.

...

On the ground, the crew was checking around to make sure that the Red Death was really dead, though they didn't need much proof. "Hard to believe we blew her into so many tiny pieces," said Techo to Wilson.

There was a squelching 'thud' behind them and they turned to see that an intact fang had landed point down through Morph. "Is anyone else getting a headache?" Morph asked before he inflated, proving that Red Deaths had venomous fangs.

"We don't have to pick up every large piece left of that thing, do we?" asked Wilson.

"Nah...leave it where it is," said Matt nastily before seemingly looking over at Starflame as she landed. "Oh...what happened to you?" he wailed, Starflame perking up.

"Finally, he's catching on,"_ said Kala happily before stopping as Matt ran past and grabbed some wreckage.

"Did the mean dragon hurt you?" he gibbered, Kala's eye twitching.

"I'm gonna give him one chance to realize his dragon has, at the very least, been mind-controlled by that tyrant lizard and he better twig about that very soon,"_ she growled.

Matt's self-preservation seemed to spark at that "Ok...you're not evil anymore, Starflame," he said in a casual voice before going back to wailing over the wreckage.

Kala twitched and said, "Well, he at least figured out I've been enthralled. Maybe I should let him off easy... Nah."_ With that, she plasma blasted Matt in the back.

Toothless and Hiccup both winced at that. "Hey, at least she's back to normal, buddy," said Hiccup with a wince as Starflame/Kala mauled Matt.

Toothless rolled his eyes and muttered, "You have no idea."_

...

The mood back at Berk was already cheerful when the kids returned, not only with their dragons but everyone else's too...well, except for Mildew who looked like Christmas had been cancelled and had billed him for it to boot. For this occasion, Stoick had them celebrate the way Vikings did best: feasting.

Matt looked at what he'd been given...looked up at it. "I gotta eat all this?" he said weakly.

"A strong warrior needs to keep up his strength," said Gobber, clapping Matt on the back, "Especially after defeating a big dragon like the Red Death."

"Yeah...I suppose," groaned Matt.

"I'd start now before someone else takes it," said Gobber.

"Like who?" asked Matt.

"Me, for instance," said Gobber, snatching a bun from Matt's plate.

"Oi!" snapped Matt, lunging for the vanishing bun.

...

The remnants of the North Star had been stripped by the gang before they left. Any technology too heavy to take had been destroyed...such as the ship's energy core. However, if the gang had stayed, they might have noticed the shattered cover stone...

Name: Mac

Species: Data based lifeform

Bio: Mac was 'adopted' by Techo during the events of Operation: Loose ends' (see 'CPS Chronicles: Loose ends' for details) when he wandered into the Skyraid's computer systems by accident. His species, usually starting their lives in cyberspace, got their sustenance from consuming data. Unfortunately for Mac, none of his species had tried the 'high energy diet' of NSC data systems and such data caused him to start exponentially cloning himself.

Though the gang managed to stop this problem in its tracks, it was also made clear that Mac had gone completely and utterly nuts. When the gang eventually left, the crew had standing orders to leave Mac behind. However Techo disobeyed this order for the simple reason of the sort of damage Mac could do by accident.

For the next several years, Techo would keep Mac in secret and it is suspected that many of the ship malfunctions the gang has suffered can be laid plainly at Mac's...well, he hasn't got feet but you get the idea.

* * *

><p>Well, it's been quite a long time, but we're updating chapters again. The Red Death in this chapter may be dead, but there's still a lot of trouble to take care of, namely Anton and OmegaMorph being on the planet. And that might actually be the least of it. We've got a couple of chapters finished and ready, so we'll be seeing a weekly update for at least a month now. So check back next Monday to see the next chapter. Please review.<p>

10. Cruel Mercy

****Voyagers Saga****

****Broken Nest****

****Chapter 10: Cruel Mercy****

The loss of the North Star had been a blow. Now the gang really DID have to use a longboat. To that end the gang were trying to get to know some of the neighbors, not wanting to run the risk that WARDEN couldn't get control of the base computers...for if that happened, they'd have to live their disguises.

While Berk may be situated in the vacant side of nowhere, travel by longboat made it possible to access more settled areas where the Vikings are known to visit whenever Trader Johan isn't readily available. While official contact with the New World had not yet happened and thus limited the food selection, there were at least things that can balance out a diet.

That and they could cheat and just make pizza back at the base if needed.

"Ok...we got the flour...the eggs..." muttered Matt, having wandered off. Starflame had, since the run in with the Red Death, been giving him the cold shoulder and also a fireball to the face. As such she was still over in Berk. "I suppose while we're here I can pick up something special for Starflame," said Matt, "But what do you get a grumpy dragoness?"

He looked around before jumping to see a young woman standing behind him. Once he was sure that his heart hadn't in fact burst out his chest and shot away screaming, he said "Smeg it, you gave me a shock, lady."

"My apologies," said the young woman, "I've just been drawn to your unique aura." Now that Matt had a good look at her, he could see she was quite beautiful, with long gold hair framing her face and a blue gown that demonstrated a well-shaped figure. "Can I interest you in some tea?" she asked.

Matt thought about it...for about half a second before he said "Sure, why not? Wait, has tea been invented yet?" adding the last part to himself.

"It's imported from the Orient," said the woman before walking off, "Come to my tent." Matt, who had never really paid much attention in history, filed it under 'believable excuse' and followed her.

The tent was made of purple material and when Matt walked inside, he could see various astrological symbols sewn on the cloth walls. A table and two chairs were set in the middle of the tent.

"Oh no, you're a palm reader, aren't you. I haven't got any gold to cross your palm with and I know what it'll say, that I'll be shot at some point this week...or mauled by a sea serpent again," said Matt, bitterly, turning to leave.

"My methods of divination are a lot more precise than looking at your

palm," said the woman, "And I predict that they are of more significance than what's going to happen to you on a regular basis."

Matt paused at that, before growling to himself and turning. "Ok...name one. Earn that silver palm," he said sitting down and rudely propping his feet up.

Almost immediately, a pair of red cats came out from behind some cushions and started circling Matt's chair. "Ooooh...kitties. First pets I've seen that are smaller than me...except maybe the Terrors," said Matt, not taking the hint.

"My cats sense that you have a potentially hostile nature," said the woman, "But they know you are capable of much love."

"Lady...your cats are smarter then they look. But if that's some kinda proposition from you, I only have eyes for one girl," said Matt icily.

"Good," said the woman, "A lesser man would have tried to make an advance on me. Where is your beloved?"

"Not a clue. If I told you how I lost her, you'd laugh me out your yurt," said Matt sarcastically.

"Are you certain you don't have any clue?" asked the woman, "Not even a little hunch as to where she is?"

"I tried everything to find her," said Matt, gloomily before snapping, "And what business is it of yours?"

"I have a...gift for knowing when there are problems of love," said the woman, "Perhaps I might be able to divine where she is, if the Norns are lenient."

Matt's eyes narrowed. "Now I know this is a rip off...good day to you...OOOAH!" he said as one of the cats tripped him before the other sat on his back, surprisingly heavy for such a tiny kitty.

"My cats do not tolerate me being insulted very well. I suggest you control your temper. They can become very nasty when angry," said the woman.

"And heavy too." muttered Matt as the woman sat down smugly

"Now then, let us see if the Norns will listen to my request," said the woman.

"Who are the Norns?" asked Matt.

"The three mystic women who design the destiny of mortals and gods," said the woman, "You might know them as the Fates."

"Them...THEM!" said Matt, his eyes literally going red, the cats jumping off as they recognized a good show about to start. "That...scum has made my life...HELL!" snapped Matt, twitching.

"I'd be careful what you say," said the woman, "The Norns are known to strike mortals who curse them."

"They've preemptively cursed me then. Go on, ask them some of the things they've done to Matthew James Lynch, but get comfy...it's pretty long," said Matt manically.

The woman scattered her runestones on a board. The stones didn't stay in one position for long, continuously rolling around to spell new messages. "Oh my, I've never seen anything like this before," she said.

"It was unprovoked, I'd like to say." snapped Matt angrily, before getting up and yelling at the stones. "SEE? I'M ONTO YOU!"

"You and the Norns seem to have quite a history," said the woman.

"Of course we do. NOW GET OFF MY BACK, YOU SADISTIC OLD HAGS!" snapped Matt at the stones. Just then, a bolt of lightning shot through the tent's ceiling and struck Matt, causing him to land in a twitching heap. "Ok, I'm done venting now," he said.

With that, Matt got up and sat down opposite. "If you know those...persons...can you make them stop?" he asked, hope dripping from his voice.

"The Norns are difficult to negotiate with," said the woman before the stones stopped rolling, "It would seem that you have a considerable amount of guilt that needs to be levitated before they can consider removing their wrath."

"How much guilt could that possibly be?" asked Matt.

The woman picked up a round stone from the table and said, "Try to hold this." Matt took the ball and vanished through the floor like it was made of water. The woman winced before quickly snapping her fingers to remove the ball.

Matt climbed out of the hole in the ground and snapped, "That's it, lady! I'm sick of this stupid tent of telepathy and weirdness. You're gonna start giving real answers right now or I burn this place to the ground!"

"Take your best sho-" began the woman before a plasma ball exploded on her.

"There...now I'm leaving and I don't expect a bill." said Matt, mostly presuming he was just talking to the cats now. However, as Matt was heading for the tent flap, the two cats blocked his way and started hissing angrily. "Beat it. I'm not wasting plasma on you and cats taste terrible," snapped Matt.

One of the cats actually stopped hissing at that with a 'what the fuck?' expression in its eyes, before they both swelled to the size of tigers, Matt jumping back with a surprisingly girly scream. The two cats tackled Matt and held him to the ground, their raised hackles actually blazing with fire. "I warned you not to get my cats angry," said the woman's voice.

"Wait...you exploded," whimpered Matt.

"I think your skull is not so thick enough to realize you are not in the presence of mortals now," said the woman.

"Yes...mortals explode," whimpered Matt before saying "Nice kitties?"

The cats snarled, showing very large fangs. "I suggest you apologize. They are very unforgiving towards aggressors," said the woman.

"Erm...sorry I tried to blow up your boss?" Matt tried, smiling as nicely as he could. The cats growled before shrining down to their previous forms. But they still sat on his chest with looks that said 'pet us or we get nasty'.

Matt definitely got that message, stroking the top of their heads with nervous smiles. "Ok...who are you, lady? If you're another Shar-Khan, that would just make my day complete," he said.

"I am Freya," she said, pausing for Matt to understand who he was dealing with.

Matt blinked before he said "That's a nice name." causing Freya to stare a little.

"Really? You haven't heard of me?" she asked exasperated.

"Nope...never heard that name on someone with two legs. Knew an Avalarian called Freya, she baked mutton pies," said Matt.

"Freya, the Norse goddess of beauty, magic, and war?" asked Freya.

"Nope, got nothing...wait, you're a goddess? Ohshit...I blew up a goddess," said Matt, going pale as it hit home.

Freya sighed and said, "You really are dense. No wonder they said you needed help."

"Wait...the same Fates that turned me into a half dragon freak of nature, thrust me into hell after hell and caused my sister to be evil for several years want to help ME?" said Matt disbelieving.

"Not them, but some immortal friends of yours thought you may need some assistance with finding Kala. They understated how clueless you were," said Freya.

"Wait...does one of these guys wear a black suit and talk in a stop-starting sort of fashion?" said Matt, curiously.

"Oh, good, you have some skill at being able to guess after all," said Freya dryly.

"What's the deal? There is always a catch," said Matt, equally icily, the cats' heads going back and forth like they were watching tennis.

"As hard as you've tried, you have been unable to see Kala or hear

her with your own eyes and ears," said Freya as she went to a chest and opened it, "So you must use another's eyes and ears." She pulled out a large cloak covered with leathery scales.

Matt literally jumped back a foot as he recognized the clasp. "Are you insane? I'm not wearing that. I know perfectly well what it does."

"Unlike the cloaks used by Circe, which she borrowed and never gave back, this one is untainted and will work as it is supposed to do," said Freya.

"What job's that?" said Matt in a distrusting voice

"To travel and understand this world as a true dragon would, not like one of you alien dragons from another world. It is not meant to control or imprison like Circe had ruined hers with," said Freya.

"Somehow...not trusting you completely. Like I said...what's the catch?" said Matt stubbornly.

"The catch being that you will not be able to remove the cloak or change back until you realize all that you should have learned. You will also be stripped of some of the more unique features of the Avalarians; controlling elemental energies, channeling magic, and the ability to speak human tongues."

Matt glared. "Where is she?" he said nastily, his eyes taking on another glow.

"Nearer than you ever would have guessed and she'll always remain hidden to you until you wear this cloak," said Freya, "Because I can assure you that you'll never be able to guess where she is without it."

"Try me. I could just blow a few shrines up till you tell me. I don't like being blackmailed into doing someone's little game. The last one who tired ended up on the end of my ion blade," growled Matt

Freya was immediately surrounded by a blinding golden aura as her voice echoed loudly, "Don't presume that you can threat me, mortal! I am a goddess and my power far outstrips yours! I do not offer this opportunity to find Kala on a mere whim. This is your last chance and if you do not take it, you will never find her even if you wandered this world for a hundred years!"

"I've threatened worse. I've threatened wraiths that turned people into undead corpses with a glance. I've faced the nightmares of the voidâ€¦" snapped Matt...before he glared, sensing that probably one of the reasons he wouldn't find Kala solo now he knew Taleth had lied, would be due to some 'divine interference'. With that he snatched the cloak. "Fine, I'll play your little game," he snapped.

The aura around Freya disappeared and said, "Now that wasn't so hard, was it? Now, before you put it on, I suggest you inform at least some of your crew what will happen. Wouldn't do much good if you've burned your own bridges."

Mat however was already gone, and he appeared to have rather pettily set what he presumed was her cart outside on fire

Freya looked at the cart and said, "I feel sorry for whoever's cart he had just burned down. I suppose I'll have to leave something for them to buy a new one."

One of the cats looked up and asked in perfect Norse "Shouldn't we tell him we didn't have a cart?"

"No, I think his temper's been roused too much already," said Freya, "Besides, he'll feel like a fool for burning the wrong cart."

...

"Where have you been? Chloe nearly killed someone when they tried to buy her," snapped Techo as Matt walked into view, holding a bundle

"I've been with...really? Did someone record that because I'd have to see it to believe that," said Matt.

"Not really...look, they were gonna call the cops, we gotta go," said Techo before someone yelled "THERE HE IS!"

"As many a great man has once said: LEG IT!" yelled Matt before bolting.

...

Once they were back at base, Matt had sneaked away. There was no way they'd believe him about what had happened. Hell, even Matt was having trouble believing it. But he had to admit, he was desperate. They've searched for Kala every possible way they could with the limited technology they had. Even Megan's locator spells couldn't get a fix on her.

To that end, he'd sneaked up to the surface that night and was looking at the cloak. It definitely looked less evil than its Circe counterpart. And according to Freya, he'd only be wearing it until he had learned whatever it was he was supposed to have learned and that couldn't be too much, right?

"Ok...let's see...I left a note with Morph to give to them so they don't worry...so that's sorted," muttered Matt before throwing the cloak over his shoulders, clicking the clasp in place. Matt waited a while for the cloak to kick in but nothing seemed to happen. "Oh don't tell me she gave me a dud cloak," muttered Matt.

He was about to try and take it off when the clasp made an ominous 'click; and the embedded eye jewels began to glow. Matt immediately started having second thoughts and tried to get the clasp open. The cloak however seemed to have other ideas, Matt getting a horrible feeling of been squeezed by it as it seemed to tighten, as well as growing and begin to engulf him. Then he felt the cloak's hood start to wrap around his head. And he wasn't certain if the cloak had a hood before he put it on.

Things went dark as it covered him before his vision came back, Matt

finding himself in the familiar quadruped stance of an Avalarian dragon, though he was certainly smaller than he had been. 'Ok, so I'm a dragon,' thought Matt, '_This isn't so bad. What was I so worried about?_'

He stopped as his ears processed what he had said. He knew what he had said smegdammit...but that hadn't been what he'd heard. "_What's wrong with my voice?"_ Matt asked but only heard a dragon's growl, even though it was understandable to him.

"Urgh...smeg it,"_ he said before a bored voice said "_Hey...what's your problem?"_

Matt looked around before looking down at a Terrible Terror. "_Are you talking to me?"_ he asked.

"Who else would I be talking to, genius?"_ said the Terrible Terror in a bored voice.

"Ok, so I can hear what other dragons are saying now,"_ said Matt, "_That's neat, but am I going to hear anything useful?"_

"I could just bite the thunder wire under the snow and set off the humans' alarm,"_ said the Terrible Terror casually.

Matt turned and snapped, "_Hey, no damaging stuff at my base."_

"Your base? You don't look like a human,"_ said the Terrible Terror.

"Well I was just a few seconds ago, weren't you looking?"_ asked Matt.

"Nope...was asleep,"_ said the Terrible Terror.

Matt gave an annoyed snort before saying, "_I've got better things to do than talk to you. I need to find Kala."_

"The weirdo dragon at that Viking village? Why'd you wanna talk to..."_ began the Terrible Terror before, from its perspective, everything turned small, dark, damp and smelling of fish. "_JUST ASKING!"_ it screamed before Matt spat it out.

"Tell me exactly where she is or you'll be seeing the next site of my digestive tract tour,"_ growled Matt.

"BERK! I HEARD SHE'S AT BERK!"_ screamed the Terrible Terror

"Good, now if you'll excuse me, I have a girlfriend to find,"_ said Matt before turning and taking off.

As soon as Matt had flown off, the Terrible Terror glowed before turning into one of Freya's cats. "_Urgh...dragon drool,"_ it muttered.

...

As Matt was approaching Berk, he wondered how Kala could possibly be

there. Surely she would have come to him by now. Maybe she had hit her head during the evacuation of the Bladestorm and got amnesia. But wouldn't he have noticed her?

"Ok, it's still night. I head for the academy, that's where she'll be," said Matt to himself, getting sight of said academy and swooping down. However, the gate was locked and Matt now lacked the thumbs necessary for removing it the easy way.

"Ah, smeg it," he muttered, concentrating on the lock and sighing as he remembered that Freya had said that his abilities would be crippled, helped as a nanite message appeared, informing him that hostile magic has disabled his abilities but that the nanites were already working on removing the problem and that they had managed to retain basic Avalarian abilities. "That's something, noisier then I'd like though," he said, spitting a plasma blast at the gates. Pieces of the gates were blasted off before they swung open. "That did it," said Matt before walking inside.

A couple of dragons were present, including Starflame that was staring in dumbfounded shock. "There's a latch you know," she said icily, in a voice that shot straight to Matt's memory and pulled out a file to wave in his mental face.

"That voice...no, it couldn't be..." he said in shock.

"Wait...I know that voice," said Starflame, adding "Matt? You finally bothered to use your translator?" a warning tone coming into her voice

"Kala? You were Starflame all along?" asked Matt, "Why didn't you tell me?"

"Because Night Furies and their fellow local strains can't SPEAK, DUMBASS!" she said, yelling the last part.

"Uh...well at least I've finally found you, right?" asked Matt nervously.

"Yes...after a MONTH...of being your personal ride...playing charades to get your attention. I all but drew an arrow and danced in front of it!" snapped Starflame, or Kala as Matt now realized to his mounting worry...mostly cause she looked ready to rip him a new one.

"Now Kala...let's not overreact," said Matt.

"I am not overreacting, THIS IS EXACTLY HOW I SHOULD BE REACTING!" roared Kala before spitting fireballs at Matt.

...

The kids and their dragons, along with half the town had been waked in quite well by the first explosion of Matt's entry into the academy. As it was, Hiccup and the others arrived to see a dragon being chased around the arena by a very angry looking Starflame

"What kind of dragon is that?" asked Tuffnut.

"Whatever it is, Starflame doesn't like it," said Ruffnut.

The chased dragon turned to look at them before seemingly slapping its snout with its paw...right before Starflame arrived and tackled him. The kids watched the two dragons roll around for a while. "Is it me, or does that dragon bear a resemblance to Matt in his dragon form?" asked Fishlegs.

The attacked dragon seemed to perk up at that, nodding urgently before Kala spoiled it by jumping up and down on his head, causing him to repeatedly faceplant. "I think Matt's form is bigger," said Astrid.

The dragons meanwhile were watching. _"Kala...I think he's had enough,"_ said Stormfly, noting with the wince that Kala's victim had stopped making noises other than 'squish'

"MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS! HE HAD IT COMING!" yelled Kala before grabbing Matt by the tail and slamming him against the wall.

"Uncle...UNCLE!" screamed the other dragon in a familiar voice

"Does that voice sound familiar?" asked Barf.

"Kinda, it'd be more recognizable if he was screaming like a hatchling," said Belch.

At that point, Kala dealt a blow that caused Hookfang, Barf and Belch and Toothless to wince, earning the requested girly shriek.

"Yep, that's Matt alright," said Belch.

"No question," said Barf.

"Kala...please stop...you're killing me...literally," rasped Matt.

"Guys, I think we have to intervene," said Toothless.

"Ok, you go first," said Hookfang.

Hiccup had the same idea. "Starflame...you need to calm down. I think that dragon's had enough," he said carefully.

She only just roared at Hiccup before carrying on. "What's all this racket?" yelled Gobber as he walked in, "Can't a Viking get any rest around here?"

"I think Starflame's found an old enemy...like with the Whispering Death and Toothless," said Hiccup, backing up from the fight.

"I have just the thing," said Gobber cheerfully.

"Whatever it is, you better do it quick," said Astrid, "I think she's going for his throat."

Kala was indeed looking like she was ready to. _"Now then, dear. Let's not eat someone we'll regret later. I taste horrible,"_

gibbered Matt

Unfortunately, Kala's rage had pushed her beyond reasonable. _"You abandoned me,"_ she snarled, _"You treated me like an animal. Now I am an animal."_ She opened her fang-filled mouth wide.

"KALA!" roared Matt before Kala's eyes crossed and she fell forward onto him, Gobber standing behind.

"And that's now ye deal with a rampaging dragon." he said.

Matt sighed with relief before noticing a club becoming rapidly larger. _"Ah cr-"_ *bonk*

...

When Matt woke up again, it was morning and he was in a cell. One of the dragon cells in the arena to be precise. And his sense of smell could tell him that Kala was his next-door neighbor. _"Kala?"_ he tried...from the opposite end of his cell...just in case.

"So you've woken up," said Kala's voice coldly.

"Yes...yes I have. Thank God for the nanites," said Matt, wincing as his vision told him what the nanites had been forced to heal overnight, it was a long list.

"Nanites aren't that great," said Kala, _"If they were, they would have fixed me weeks ago."_

"They can't fix encoding. All we need to do is get off this mudball," said Matt, mentally hoping this was a sign that Kala was forgiving him.

"Like you have anything that could leave this planet," said Kala, _"I saw the North Star, it's scrap."_

"We found an old pre-NSC battlecruiser. It'll be ready in a couple of weeks last time I asked Techo," said Matt.

"I don't exactly have much confidence in him," said Kala, _"But there aren't too many people around here who can be relied on, is there?"_

"All the nanite scanners exploded on the Bladestorm..." said Matt darkly.

"Was that the only way you'd have been able to tell who I was?" snapped Kala, _"You've looked me in the eyes several times and all you saw was a flying steed who just happened to be too clingy."_

"Your eyes weren't even the same color. I've been attacked several times since I got here. I've been busy trying to remain breathing. You've been living it up here," snapped Matt angrily.

"Oh sure, I've been very well treated as a pet," snapped Kala, _"And what would have happened if you hadn't figured out who I was. Would you have left me here, thinking I was some simple dragon or would I have just become another mascot?"_

Matt stopped at that. _"I would have torn this planet apart to find you. I tried to atomize a goddess cause she withheld where you were,"_ he said in a dangerously low voice.

"A goddess?" asked Kala.

"Yeah, Norse goddess of love and beauty," said Matt, _"I could have probably gotten more exact information if she hadn't kept teasing me."_

"So, you were allowing some flaxen-haired tart to tease you?" asked Kala in a stiff tone.

"Her hair was golden and it was only...er...I distinctly told her there was only one girl for me. Ask her if you don't believe me," said Matt.

"Ok...I'll pull a summoning spell OUT MY ARSE!" screamed Kala, causing dust to rain down.

"Hey, I'm getting the bad end of the deal too," said Matt, _"I'm stuck in this form, I can barely use my Avalarian powers, and I can't talk."_

"Oh, and that must have been for the last 4 hours. I wonder how bad that would have been after 4 weeks," said Kala sarcastically.

Something else had occurred to Matt that was filling him with mounting horror. The nanite scanners wouldn't have worked on Kala as she didn't have NSC nanites...Matt did...and if the marauders came looking for him like this...

"We have to leave...now," he said sternly.

"Sorry, these doors don't open easily on this side, particularly if you don't have thumbs," said Kala.

"Then I blow them down," said Matt nastily, turning to blast his door before a warning appeared. "Power depleted...nanites attempting to restore magi based abilities...thank you for your patience."

Matt started butting his head against the bars if for no other reason to alleviate his frustration. _"I hope you at least had the common sense to tell somebody about this farfetched plan before you cut off your communication skills,"_ said Kala.

"I gave Morph a letter to give to them," said Matt calmly, before his ears picked up another rhythmic clanking noise. He quickly deduced the source of the noise. _"Oh, come on,"_ said Matt over Kala's head banging, _"I know Morph's an idiot, but he can't be that bad a messenger."_

...

Techo and Wilson walked along behind Chloe. "What do you mean that he's gone?" she snapped.

"He's just not here," said Wilson, "Nobody's seen him since last

night."

Dammit...hey, what are those two doing?" Chloe muttered, spotting Morph and Mac, messing with some kind of letter.

"Playing with paper and scissors apparently," said Techo, "Morph, you remember what we told you about playing with scissors, right?"

Morph turned to show that the scissors were stuck out of his ear. "Sorry, I got a headache, came out of nowhere. Look what we made. Matt gave me this paper for some reason. I think it was important," he said cheerfully, before Mac floated by, a paper pirate hat on his head "AMMA SPACE PIRATE!" he screamed before vanishing into an intercom

"Morph, can we see the paper?" asked Chloe. Morph nodded, holding up a string of Stitch outlines linking hands. "Never mind," said Chloe darkly

"You don't think that Matt told Morph where he was going, did you?" asked Wilson.

"Don't be silly," said Techo, "Matt wouldn't have trusted that info to a scatterbrain like him."

"Yeah, let's see if those spiderbots work as intended. I read their manual last night," said Chloe, walking off and Techo saying "They have a manual?"

...

Since Starflame seemed to have calmed down, the kids had let both her and the new dragon out, though they were keeping them at opposite sides of the arena.

"Maybe not all the dragons stayed at that city," suggested Astrid staring at Matt closely who, Matt being unable to be a joker, licked her face without warning, chuckling.

"Well, I suppose we should figure out how to list him in the Book of Dragons," said Hiccup.

Matt, unheard except to the dragons muttered _"Good luck with that."_

Hiccup looked at the daggers that Starflame was glaring before he looked at Toothless. "Think you can keep them calm?" he asked. Toothless made a discouraged growl. "Well, try your best. We can't let anything bad happen to these two," said Hiccup.

Toothless nodded as the kids left, their dragons also remaining behind to keep some order. Toothless sighed and mentally counted, getting to three before Kala screamed _"YOU'RE DEAD, LYNCH!"_

_ "You can't kill me. You need to get off this planet and change back,"_ said Matt, blowing his tongue at her.

Kala stopped before blurting out, _"What if I don't want to leave?"_

"You're not fooling me with that," said Matt, smugly _"You couldn't possibly want to stay here like this."_

"Why not? You left me in the lurch. The dragons here had my back. There's even a pretty handsome specimen of my new form right here," said Kala loftily, causing both Matt and Toothless to gibber a little.

Kala smirked. She wasn't sure if Matt would learn anything from his beating, especially he got those a lot. But this was definitely certain to stick. She also had to admit that Toothless was pretty handsome. She probably should have been worried about that last part, but she was having too much fun now.

Toothless however was sweating...impressive given that he was reptilian. _"Erm...Kala? Maybe you need to calm down a little. You clearly don't know what you're saying,"_ he said, spotting that it was Matt's turn to glare now, the glare aimed at him.

"So THAT'S what you've been doing...EH? SWEEPING MY BUSHI'BU OFF HER FEET?!" he said, one of his eyes nearly popping out from its bulging.

"Me? No, no, I haven't even gotten close to her," said Toothless desperately.

"EXACTLY WHAT I'D EXPECT YOU TO SAY! DIIIE, GIRLFRIEND STEALER!" screamed Matt, lunging clumsily.

Toothless quickly moved away from Matt. _"Matt, calm down, you're not thinking straight,"_ said Toothless.

"Yeah...yeah...this is crazy...you're being crazy...no you're not...get him...SHUT UP DRACONUS!" said Matt, apparently talking to himself.

Toothless however let out a sigh before looking to his side to see Kala, who was grinning like a loon. _"Hi!"_ she said before glomping him.

"KALA! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!" yelled Toothless.

"Hugging my mate, what else?" said Kala before licking him.

Matt had been staring at that before the remnant of his self-restraint let loose. _"DIIIIIIIE!"_ he screamed, charging at Toothless until Stormfly, Hookfang, Barf, Belch and Meatlug all managed to hold him down...mostly. He was still slowly clawing his way forward, clearly with prolonged murder in mind.

"Ok, Kala, Matt's had enough teasing. GET OFF OF ME!" yelled Toothless.

"Who's teasing handsome?" said Kala before something clicked as Matt howled again and doubled his efforts to deliver his package of pain. _"Wait...what's going...PERVERT!"_ she screamed, clonking Toothless and stalking off.

"What did I do?" whined Toothless.

Matt had calmed down a little now that Kala was further away.
"Explain or suffer," he said darkly once the other dragons had gotten off him, though he hadn't moved.

"I swear I didn't do anything," moaned Toothless, _"You two just went crazy."_

"Fine, but if you try to take advantage of her, I'll eat you," said Matt, adding the last part cheerfully.

"That was never in my thoughts," said Toothless quickly.

"Good. I'm nastier than Matt, believe me he wants us to eat you," said 'Matt' before twitching. _"Fine..."_ he said darkly, before heading off.

...

"Definitely not in the book." said Hiccup, closing the book of dragons with a final snapping noise.

"A new dragon species, what should we call it?" asked Fishlegs.

Sadly before anyone could suggest anything, one of Matt's little metal spiders landed on the book. "BLARRG!" it shrieked at them, hopping up and down.

The kids jumped back but quickly calmed down once they saw what it was. "It's just one of the metal spiders," said Hiccup, "What do you want? We're trying to document a new dragon."

The spiderbot got into a stable position before a beam of light shot out its optics, causing what appeared to be Chloe to appear, though her legs were missing. "Finally, been trying to...you're not my brother," she said.

"Chloe, is that you?" asked Snotlout, poking his finger through her.

"Stop that, and yes it is. Look, has my brother turned up at all? We just got the base's nanoscanners working and it says he's there...but the thing's malfunctioning, it also says he isn't there," said Chloe.

"We haven't seen him," said Hiccup, "Just a new dragon that looks somewhat like him."

"New dragon?" said Chloe suddenly.

"It looks a bit like Matt, but smaller and it can't talk," said Fishlegs.

"Oh no...did it happen to have a weird clasp on its chest?" said Chloe, facepalming.

"A weird clasp?" asked Astrid, "Like what Hiccup had on him when Circe made him wear that cloak?"

"Yeah, he was acting weird when he got back from the trading post and

he'd got his hands on some kinda blanket," said Chloe.

Hiccup turned to the others and asked, "Anyone notice any markings on that dragon's chest?"

The others shook their heads, Chloe glaring. "We're coming to you. I'm gonna check this newbie personally...and if it's my brother, I'm going to turn him into a handbag," she snapped, the connection vanishing.

"So, I guess we're not putting it into the Book of Dragons," said Fishlegs.

...

Sadly, the page that had mentioned how using the spiderbots for comm units rendered any secure channels useless had also been a casualty of Mac and Morph's paper making. Of course, someone had to be listening...like an imperial drone.

...

"Oh, cheer up, OmegaMorph. Make a snowman or something," taunted Anton, the duo walking through the combined Marauder/empire camp.

"I don't make, I destroy," growled OmegaMorph.

"Then make a snowman then destroy it...or do I have to turn up your behavior modifier," said Anton nastily before they stopped, a drone having come up.

"Commanders...a communication has been detected. Rebel forces are sending a team to a village 98 miles due west," it said.

"Finally, I was wondering when they'd show themselves," said OmegaMorph.

"There is more...two nanomatches have been located...a closer scan will be required for ID but two of their main number are vulnerable," said the drone calmly.

"I wonder which two those could be?" muttered Anton.

"Let's go find out...give me a squad and I'll go fetch them," said OmegaMorph with a smirk.

"Why not? It'll give me some time away from you," said Anton.

"Finally...a little slaughter...slaught..." began OmegaMorph, twitching as he glowed red, Anton grinning "Like I'm letting you loose without a leash," he said.

OmegaMorph growled and said, "No fair."

"Tough, that island's full of timeline specifics...and some the boss may want alive, take a list," said Anton, tossing a PADD over.

OmegaMorph snarled and muttered, "I never get to have my kind of fun

anymore."

Anton glared. "Your kind of 'fun' would have a mountain of skulls a mile high and you eating nachos at the top. No unnecessary killing or infections," he snapped.

OmegaMorph groaned and grumbled, "Why did I have to come to this stupid planet?"

"Because the emperor wants to see how you do at live capture," said Anton calmly.

...

Since the naming of the new dragon was gonna be put on hold, Snotlout decided he and Hookfang can do something more exciting, like scaring seagulls at the docks. "Nice one, Hookfang," grinned Snotlout as the seagulls were sent scattering again.

Just then, Hookfang sniffed something and backed up. "What? What are you doing?" asked Snotlout. He looked up to see some white things dropping down from the seagulls. "Oh no," he said before quickly running away.

The running stopped when the droppings appeared to stop in midair. "Great...Changewings," muttered Snotlout, "Wait a second, what would a Changewing be doing here?" Hookfang was growling at the floating droppings.

A clink at Snotlout's feet got his attention, a small orb at his feet with a red light that was flashing faster and faster with a rising beep. "That doesn't look good," said Snotlout, backing away.

It wasn't, the orb exploding soundlessly with a bright white flash, causing dragon and rider to crumple into snoring heaps. A second later a half dozen droids and OmegaMorph landed on the dock. "Too easy...shoot em," he said.

"These are timeline specifics, killing them is forbidden," said one of the droids.

"Aw...dammit Anton," muttered OmegaMorph, checking his PADD and doubly sighing as he realized the kid and his dragon weren't listed. "I never get any fun," he complained.

"Nanite signature detected," said one of the droids, "Scanning for source..."

...

Chloe jumped off onto the beach, the gang having decided to not use the main dock...mostly cause of the nano-scanner they'd brought. The nano-scanner was something they found in the old cruiser. It was pretty outdated, only able to detect nanites from a short range. But Techo had managed to get it working again. It was also far too large to hide meaning the gang was planning to sneak in...a plan which went out the window as an empire transport flew overhead, shimmering into nothing as its cloak vanished.

"Oh, this could not happen at a more inopportune time," groaned

Chloe.

"We gotta go...NOW!" snapped Chris.

...

The group ran down the ramp into the arena to see the kids and their dragons out cold...though Hiccup, Starflame and whatever new dragon they'd come to check were already gone, as evidenced by a fading nanite signal. "Kids...Techo...wake em up" said Chloe.

Techo checked them and said, "Basic sleep grenade, meant to put everyone within a mile radius to sleep. But not an unwakeable sleep. Chloe, if you can provide a shock..." Chloe glared, a cloud appearing before several well aimed lightning bolts...woke everyone. Though they might have trouble sitting for a few minutes

Astrid was first up, clearly a morning person. "Urgh...what happened? The last thing I remember was a flash of light..." she groaned.

"Someone hit the town with a kind of sleep spell," said Chris, not having the time or patience to explain the scientific method that actually happened.

"Wait...where's Hiccup? He was right there," Astrid said, realizing who was missing from the picture. The kids, who were all wide awake by now, noticed the missing people...and dragons. "Oh no," said Astrid faintly.

"Look, we'll handle these guys. They are light years out of your league," said Chris.

"They took Hiccup and Toothless, we're not going to let them get away with that," said Astrid sternly.

"Yes, but these people will KILL you, easily I might add. Let us handle this," said Techo.

"You can't stop us from coming," said Astrid.

"We can if we leave someone to keep you from following us," said Chloe.

"Like who?" demanded Ruffnut, Chloe smirking and stepping aside to let something rise out of her shadow.

"Me for a start," said NegaMorph casually.

"You're leaving your demon behind?" asked Snotlout.

"I am not a demon!" snapped NegaMorph.

"He's not a demon, he's a crime against nature," said Techo.

NegaMorph nodded. "Exactly...wait a minute," he said, pausing as he processed what Techo had said.

"What makes you think we can't just give him the slip?" said

Tuffnut.

"NegaMorph...demonstrate please," said Chloe.

NegaMorph aimed his hand-mouth and fired several fangs right in front of Tuffnut. A few eyebeams to his left made him jump back. "And for those who are particularly hard to manage..." said NegaMorph before stretching out his arm, grabbing Tuffnut by the back of his pants, and lifting him high up.

Tuffnut nodded slowly, NegaMorph dropping him. "Have fun kids. I'll make sure they're in bed by 8," he taunted.

"Don't push it," warned Chloe before she and the other mercs headed off.

NegaMorph grinned at that, before looking at the angry kids and their dragons and he realized what he'd just walked into. "Oh crap..." he muttered.

...

The last thing Matt remembered was a bright flash. And he had a feeling that when he opened his eyes, he won't be where he was last. One eye opening later and he muttered, "_I knew it."_ looking at the row of energy bars in front of him. Matt got up and stretched before saying, "_Ok, which would-be kidnapping am I beating up this week?"_

"Ah, you're awake. Don't bother to speak. Scanners say you can't at the moment," said a familiar voice, Anton strolling into view on the other side of the bars.

Typically Matt would have said something sharp and witty, but because of the aforementioned language barrier, he just growled angrily.

"Witty, Mr. Lynch, very witty. You'll be happy to know that your nanites are overwhelming whatever happened to you. You'll be talking in a day at least. It means you'll be able to scream when I get to work on you. It's not every day someone gets two chances to break an Atlantean mental wall," said Anton with a smirk.

Matt snarled and spat a fireball at Anton. Anton just laughed as the fireball was stopped by the bars. "Well...it's all down to your sister who gets the treatment," he laughed, walking off.

As it was, Toothless was woken up by the crash as Matt tried to headbutt his way through the wall in sheer rage. "_Not the eel...where are we?"_ he asked before jumping as a dent appeared in one of his walls.

"_We've been abducted by aliens,"_ said Kala dryly.

"_Is Matt trying to headbutt his way into the cell? You and me aren't even in the same cell,"_ asked Toothless, wincing as Matt screamed
"_PROVE IT!"_

"_Ok..."_ said Toothless before tapping on the wall to his right.
"_See? Solid metal, not touching her,"_ said Toothless.

A bigger dent appeared at that `_`"STOP TOUCHING!"`_` before the crashing stopped and he said `_`"Ok...I'm calm...and we're all in deep, deep crap."`_`

`_`"Why exactly is that?"`_` asked Toothless.

`_`"We've been caught by people who are gonna either dissect us or brainwash us into living weapons then repeatedly clone us into an army of pure evil,"`_` said Matt promptly in one breath.

`_`"Uh..."`_` started Toothless.

`_`"Means they're gonna kill us and takes apart to see how we work and make numerous copies of us,"`_` said Kala.

`_`"And brainwash us...don't forget that part,"`_` added Matt.

`_`"I didn't. Toothless already knows the definition of 'brainwash',"`_` said Kala.

Toothless shuddered...a race of Red Deaths. `_`"What does that...I can smell Hiccup,"`_` he said, pausing before saying the last part urgently

`_`"They probably took him for the same reason that Alvin's been trying to,"`_` said Kala.

`_`"Who?"`_` asked Matt.

`_`"Oh right, you haven't been able to hear what we dragons are talking about,"`_` said Kala in a deadpan tone.

`_`"Don't bring that up again,"`_` snapped Matt.

`_`Kala sighed "Alvin's a leader of some outcast Vikings that keeps trying to kidnap my dearest,"`_` she said, slipping back into the rose clouds.

`_`"Dearest? I'M YOUR DEAREST, YOU BACKSTABBER!"`_` yelled Matt.

`_`"Nonsense...you're not even a Night Fury,"`_` said Kala, Matt feeling a chill up his spine. She was encoding pretty fast.

`_`"Kala, I'll reprimand you for your unfaithfulness later. Right now, we need to get out of here,"`_` said Matt, `_`"Fortunately, my multipurpose cyberarm should have something that'll be able to break us out."`_` However, when he looked down at where his cyberarm should be, all he could see was a dragon's foreleg. Toothless, Kala and every marauder on guard around the brig jumped practically out their skins at the agonized shriek. After a bit, Matt said, `_`"Well, the good news is that I have my real arm back, which is kinda nice. The bad news is that we've got no means of escaping."`_`

`_`"What about Hiccup?"`_` asked Toothless.

Matt simply said darkly, `_`"Trust me, they'll be looking after him."`_`

â€|

While Matt was busy getting over his latest attack of envy/psychotic breakdown, Hiccup had been placed near one of the ships, Anton deciding that, in case of Lynch related mess ups they'd have time to leave with at least something to show for it. Alicia and some of her men had been given the job of 'guarding', something that Alicia wasn't happy about, resulting in her deciding to spread that misery around a little.

"You have any idea how much trouble you're in right now?" asked Alicia.

"Considering I'm being held captive by pirates from another world, I suppose that's pretty big trouble," said Hiccup.

Alicia glared at that. "Pirate? I'm the people sent AFTER pirates...like your new friends," she said sweetly.

"From what I know about pirates, you act more like them than Matt and his friends," said Hiccup.

"Then you don't know then very well, do you?" said Alicia with a smirk.

"Well, as much as I'm able to understand," admitted Hiccup.

"Then you don't know how many people Mr. Lynch and his little band have killed in their career." said Alicia.

"I'm...betting they were ruthless villains like you," said Hiccup.

Alicia just laughed before saying, "They were just using you...that female black dragon? The captain already knew it."

"What are you talking about?" asked Hiccup.

Alicia grinned at her fellow marauders who returned it. "He doesn't know," she taunted.

"Oh, I get it, it's the old 'torment me with stuff I don't know' thing," said Hiccup, "You really think you'll get any information from me like that?"

"Well...we do have other ways," said Alicia, her smirk turning colder as she played with her energy dagger.

"Uh, wait, don't you want me alive?" asked Hiccup.

"Maybe...but they didn't say anything about intact." said Alicia.

"We can make his legs match for a start," said another marauder.

"A lot easier to keep prisoners if they can't run away," said another.

Hiccup paled at that, backing up before a black claw went through the back of the marauder that suggested it and OmegaMorph said darkly

"Wrong, the orders were alive and unharmed. Is anyone else having trouble understanding?" tossing the dead marauder down.

If the other marauders were unnerved by their crewmember's death, they didn't show it. "We're just making sure this kid doesn't try anything," said Alicia.

"By giving him a heart attack?" said OmegaMorph, not believing a word.

"Aren't you the one always espousing the usefulness of ruling through fear?" pointed out Alicia.

"True...but he's more useful thinking straight," said OmegaMorph.

"Fine, it's not like this primitive could escape even if he was thinking straight," said Alicia.

"As my predecessor would say; never underestimate your prisoner," said OmegaMorph.

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Chloe glared. "What do you mean you can't find him?" she yelled at the gang

"Hey, our long range scanners weren't at optimal efficiency when we first landed," said Chip, "And since we're relying on the cruiser's old systems, they're not much improved."

"Can the cruiser fly?" said Chloe darkly.

"Even if it weren't still stuck in the ice, not yet," said Chip.

Chloe's eyes narrowed before a trooper ran up, "Ma'am, we got a communication. It's being broadcast wideband. It's asking for you."

"Who is it?" asked Chloe.

"It's...it's Anton, Ma'am," said the trooper nervously.

Chloe growled and said, "Something tells me he's not calling to see how we're doing."

...

"General Silvia, it's a pleasure," taunted Anton on the video screen.

"It's Miss Lynch to you," said Chloe, "And it's never a pleasure to see you except when I need to vent some anger."

"That's good...that's good. I seem to have found a couple of lost souls of your dear brother and the failed test subject he's taken a shine to," said Anton casually.

"Wait, you found Kala?" asked Chloe in disbelief.

"You didn't? I found her the minute OmegaMorph scooped her up by accident. I can spot a Shar-Khan, even an artificial one, across a crowded room," said Anton.

"I'm assuming you aren't calling just to rub it in our faces," said Chloe.

"Nope, I have a problem. You see, when Taleth attached me to the empire to keep an eye on it I was assigned to break one of the emperor's prisoners. After some fun times I did what psykers across the multiverse have failed to do: broke an Atlantean's mental will and General Angela Silvia was born," said Anton, grinning as Chloe blanched as repressed memories...mostly of pain came up before he continued.

"But then the ungrateful worm had the cheek to remember things and absconded from the empire because of the misplaced honor of a black blob. Now that guy's got a choice: he can use Silvia's brother for the replacement...or Silvia can willingly surrender and know her brother's being released along with his pet mongrel," he said the grin becoming predatory.

"Am I'm guessing the local boy and his dragon are not for bargaining," said Chloe sternly.

"That depends how cooperative you are. I write the reports and the emperor doesn't believe anything OmegaMorph says out of principle," said Anton

"And what about the rest of my crew?" asked Chloe.

"Sadly they will have escaped," said Anton, a voice in the background complaining loudly in tantalog.

"Send us a place to rendezvous. We'll haggle in person," said Chloe.

"Doesn't work like that. You agree or the deal expires as soon as I hang up," said Anton gleefully.

Chloe growled and said, "Fine, but this only because I care about my brother, his girlfriend, and the kids and dragons here."

"Fine...coordinates being sent to you now. You have 2 hours. Come along...or don't, but try anything and I'll blow your brother's brains out," said Anton, the link going dead.

"Of course, you have a plan to spring those guys and avoid returning to the Empire, right?" asked Chris.

Chloe remained silent before saying, "Get a team together."

"Great, how shall we take them down?" asked Chris.

"We don't," said Chloe darkly.

"What?" asked Chris disbelievingly.

"I'm not risking Matt. He's serious about everything he said. He'll tear my bother apart if I'm lucky," said Chloe gloomily.

"Chloe, we can't just hand you over," said Chris aghast, "You mean too much to...us."

"No. I will not let that monster turn my brother into...what I was," said Chloe spinning angrily on Chris.

"There has to be another way," said Chris.

"There isn't...not one that won't potentially end with a dead brother," said Chloe.

"Can't we at least try?" asked Chris.

"No...I won't risk my brother." snapped Chloe, pushing Chris back

Chris watched Chloe stomp out before muttering, "And I won't risk you." He got on his comm for the one being he knew of who was devious and sneaky enough to figure out how to get Matt and Chloe out of this deal.

...

"Ok, let me get this straight; you want me to go behind Chloe's back, mess up this meeting, take on my evil twin, AND rescue Matt, Kala, Toothless and Hiccup?" said NegaMorph in a bored voice.

"You're our best chance at that," said Chris.

NegaMorph sighed and said, "Well, I can do three out those four things, but not alone. I'm gonna need backup."

"You have a gang of Vikings and now the information to motivate them...do the math," said Chris in a bored voice.

"Hmm...yes, I might be able to do it. Of course, success would be more likely if you can arrange some backup, a few guys that the Empire would never expect," said NegaMorph.

"Not a chance. We're all going with Chloe. Anyway, you've acted alone before," said Chris.

"Fine, but you guys better be ready to fight and run," said NegaMorph, "I can get Matt and his buddies out of there, but you're gonna have to handle the Empire forces."

"Fine, just be careful, OmegaMorph's there," said Chris, the comm going dead.

NegaMorph groaned before turning around and said, "Kids, we've got a little project to work on."

"How did you know we were listening?" said Astrid, the kids coming out of their various hiding places.

"With great ease," said NegaMorph simply.

"Then what are we waiting for?" asked Fishlegs, "Aren't we gonna go rescue them?"

"Not without a plan. This has no room for mess-ups. There are too many lives on the line. Ok, first thing to remember; OmegaMorph is, in terms of melee fighting, a living blender. If you get close to him and try to hit him with an axe, you will be sent home in a bucket," said NegaMorph simply, making a stick man animation show said effects with some shadows.

"Second thing to remember, they'll have guns, very effective ranged weapons. "You stay in place for too long, you'll be full of holes. For example...there's this gentleman." said NegaMorph, a shadow duplicate of an assault droid appearing. Once he was sure he had their attention, he added "It also shoots lasers...and missiles...and can crush rock or say, someone's head. Aim for the glowing red door and it's blind as a bat...and also dead. Me and Silvia never bothered to report that problem because we thought it was awesome to see a robot head fly 30 feet straight up."

"So how are we going to break Hiccup and the others out?" asked Astrid.

"That'll be my job," said NegaMorph, "You guys are to assault the guys outside, make it look like you're trying to figure out which bunker has Hiccup in it?"

"How..." began Fishlegs only for NegaMorph to snap "YOU HAVE FLYING FLAMETHROWERS! Matt's proven time and again how effective that strategy is. In my experience, the element of surprise can overcome even the most prepared troops. But surprise can only last so long as you're unpredictable. If you keep them from figuring out how to attack you, you'll be able to beat before they catch on."

The kids nodded, a little intimidated by the droid. "That's a basic mech, if we're really unlucky..." began NegaMorph before realizing that he was losing his audience a little

"Can we go now?" asked Tuffnut.

"Not yet. If you guys fly, we'll be there aboouuut...4 days too late knowing the damn empire. So we're taking my way," said NegaMorph, grinning evilly.

"Your way? What do you mean your way?" asked Astrid.

"I just hope you haven't eaten." said NegaMorph, his eyes glowing purple before everyone fell into their shadows, the dragons outside doing the same. He followed after and took the lead, moving the group forward at the speed of darkness.

The group was spat out on a plateau, a glow in a distance showing where the basecamp of the empire and the marauders were. "I love a good shadow warp..." said NegaMorph happily before he noticed the ill and angry expressions. "What?" The dragons were charging up their breath attacks while the kids pulled out their melee weapons. "Hey, hey, not yet, we need to find the best way to...uh oh," said NegaMorph as he realized who they were about to tenderize.

...

Matt sighed, imagining that Kala was giving Toothless more heart eyes. _"Way to fuck things up, Matt,"_ he muttered, looking at his reflection where a red eyed version of him nodded.

"Yup...you did," said Draconus simply.

Matt glared at his reflection and said, _"I'm not in the mood for criticism, especially from you."_

"Oh, you should be. I couldn't have done better myself. Hey, maybe they'll let you be the godfather," said Draconus, laughing

Matt growled, _"Don't you have anything constructive to say?"_

"Nope...except that unless you want your grandkids to be hatched, then you should get off your arse and win her back, dumbass," snapped Draconus.

"In case you've overlooked this part, we're in a cage without any means of getting out," snapped Matt.

"When has that stopped us? Look down, does the ground look like metal?" pointed out Draconus.

Matt glanced downwards and saw not metal, but hardened earth and rock. _"Wait, we weren't on a ship this whole time?"_ he said, feeling very chagrined.

"Obviously. I doubt Omega and his cronies came in a warship. They don't wanna piss off their new frenemies, the NSC," taunted Draconus.

"Alright, then I'm digging right out of here," said Matt before raking his claws about the ground and ended wincing as he felt them bent the wrong way.

Draconus winced as well. _"Try blasting the rocks first...and maybe you should tell your girlfriend to tag along too,"_ he said.

"Right...ow," muttered Matt before yelling, _"Guys, we're still on the ground. There's just dirt and rock under us that we can dig out."_

"Do I look like a Boulder class?" protested Toothless.

"Would you rather look like a leather chair? We just blast the rock and then we dig like it's going out of fashion," Matt said, spitting a plasma bolt into the ground and then being glad he didn't have eyebrows at that moment as the backlash washed back.

"Wait, if there isn't a floor, doesn't that mean we could lift the cage?" asked Kala.

"It probably weights about...300 tons and is probably sealed down," said Matt.

_"Ok, just checking we weren't overlooking the obvious more than we

have been,"_ said Kala, an edge getting into her voice again.

"Just...blast from a distance," said Matt, coughing a smoke ring out.

After about a minute, Toothless said, _"This isn't working. I told you we're not Boulder class dragons. I'm barely getting anywhere."_

"Same here," said Kala.

"Oh for the love of smeg!" snapped Matt, digging down into the ground. As he dug down, he grumbled, _"Gotta do all the work, spring my unfaithful girlfriend and the guy she's trying to snog, next time I see Freya I'm cutting all her hair off."_

After a minute, he realized he was hearing words, a message saying "Verbal abilities restored." "Finally." he snapped, digging up...and having half a dozen guns aimed at him. He'd dug up into a marauder tent. "This isn't Disneyland...sorry," he said, diving back down. After about a second of stunned surprise, the troopers began firing down the hole and the ground around it.

OmegaMorph and Anton ran in a second later. "If that was another of those damn worm dragon things," snapped OmegaMorph.

"Unless they've taught themselves to talk, I don't think so," said a trooper.

"WHAT? Guard, Check the cells, now!" snapped Anton.

OmegaMorph walked over to the hole and said, "Looks like I've got a little digging to do."

"Remember, ALIVE!" snapped Anton, getting angrier as the guards reported an empty cell where a certain half psychotic Shar-Khan should have been. OmegaMorph growled before flowing like black water into the hole.

Anton sighed before a droid hovered up. "Sir...shuttle approaching," causing Anton to stop...of all the luck. A hostage exchange and the hostage was on the loose. Chloe just might be soft enough to hand herself over for Kala, but Anton had a feeling it wouldn't be as sincere as if her brother's life was on the line. Still, Anton knew Chloe wouldn't risk that kid getting shot.

...

Hiccup had studied his cell for any points that he could use to escape but it seemed like the best chance was sneaking a key from the guard. But that won't be easy unless they are distracted. Several running footsteps were heard outside, his 'babysitter' listening to his communicator with a frown.

"We've got a lizard digging around here," said the guard after a bit.

"Those worm things again?" asked his partner.

"Lynch apparently," said the guard.

Hiccup stopped at that as the partner said in surprise "Avalarians can dig?"

"Apparently." said the first guard before he noticed Hiccup watching, "Hey, stop eavesdropping."

"Oh, well, I just thought it might help that when dragons tunnel, they typically go to where there's fresh water," said Hiccup.

"What?" said one of the guards, the other getting his com out "Hey, Danvers, do a scan for springs under the ground. Get the blob to send some gun drones to where you find em."

"You might wanna hurry," said Hiccup, "Matt can dig pretty fast if he's properly motivated. Like when Morph buried some of his weapons to play 'buried treasure'."

"Shit, we'd better go help," said one of the troopers.

"What about him?" asked the guard.

"Who cares? Not like he can get out on his own anyways," said the trooper.

"Yeah, where's he gonna run?" laughed the other guard.

"Lynch is the bigger priority," said one of the more serious troopers, "Anton will feed us to the emperor's monster if we don't get him back."

Hiccup waited till they were gone before pushing his bed aside. Unlike Matt, he HAD looked at the floor.

He hadn't gotten very far, only being able to work when the guards were preoccupied with something. But now that they're all gone, Hiccup could act more openly. He removed his peg leg and start using it as a hoe to scrap back the earth.

A rumbling noise was heard, Hiccup looking up to see a white oval with wings landing at the edge of the base. "Something tells me I'm running out of time," said Hiccup before digging faster. Of course, it didn't seem very likely that he'd get far before they come back to get him, but he was at least going to try.

Hiccup didn't expect to get very far before the guards found out they'd been duped. As such he wasn't prepared to be pitched into a tunnel under the ground and land on Matt's head who said angrily "Ow...bloody moles."

"Matt? What are you doing here?" asked Hiccup, recognizing his voice.

"Digging," said Matt in a dazed voice.

Then Hiccup took a good look at Matt and noticed the differences with his dragon form. "Wait a minute, you're the dragon we found at the arena? Why didn't you tell us?" he asked.

"I tried, believe me. On a related note, your gods have a sick sense of humor," said Matt, snapping the last part.

Hiccup was about to ask what he meant before shaking his head. "This isn't the best time to be asking about that. Where's Toothless and Starflame?"

"Cells, been trying to dig my way to said cells without success...by the way, about that missing crewmember, she's closer than I thought she was," said Matt, a tad sarcastically.

"Those marauders were talking about her, but they didn't tell me exactly what they knew," said Hiccup.

"I'll tell you later...when you're sitting down," said Matt before asking, "Which way are the cells? I think I might be a tad lost."

...

Anton glared as Chloe, with two of Matt's friends walked forward. "Ok...where's my brother?" she called.

"He's in a special cell," said Anton, "Wouldn't want him breaking out before our deal is done."

"I want to see him before we do any deal. Not that I don't trust you...but I don't," said Chloe icily.

"Of course..." said Anton, hoping those techies had gotten that convincing hologram ready.

With that, he turned to see his 'prisoner' being dragged out by two droids, one of the new infiltrator droids being prepared for some kind of operation in the uncharted sectors. He had to admit that the droid had replicated Lynch's appearance perfectly. Now if only one of those stupid familial connection things would prevent her from figuring out the fraud.

"Matt...you ok?" called Chloe.

Anton winced, hoping the mental flash copy worked before sighing as the clone said in a perfect imitation "Really? You're asking me that?"

"I suppose that is a stupid question," said Chloe, "Are the others ok?"

"They're safe...plus they weren't part of the deal. They're leaving depends on your behavior," said Anton smugly.

Chloe glared at him and said, "How do I know you won't just take them if I go without trouble?"

"You don't. You have no choice in the matter," said Anton smugly.

"Ok, but I have one last request I'd like to make before I give myself over to the dark side," said Chloe.

"What's that?" asked Anton.

"Matt, how about you sing that song we often sang when we were kids? For old time's sake," said Chloe.

Anton sighed. "Take it away maestro," he said, covering his ears in preparation

Matt shrugged and started singing, "London Bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down..."

"Wait a second, that's actually sounding good...and on-key!" interrupted Chloe, "That can't be Matt!"

Anton swore before clicking his fingers the half dozen marauders all jumping out of cover and firing a grey goop at Chloe's hands.

"Oh, you guys are in so much..." started Chloe but when she tried to spark her hands, she couldn't get any electricity out. "Hey, what gives?" she snapped as she tried to pull the goop off.

"Plastic's so much fun, isn't it?" said Anton, grinning.

...

NegaMorph groaned, partially from pain but also from embarrassment...at least when Matt beat him senseless, Matt had the excuse of dragon powers. "You know, I'm pretty sure it's universally frowned upon to chop up and burn your commanding officer," he snapped.

"What about sucking us through...that?" said Ruffnut, shuddering.

"It's never bothered me," said NegaMorph childishly.

"Well you're not exactly...human," said Astrid.

"Course not, I'm awesome," said NegaMorph, proudly before an axe hit his head. "Ok, ok, let's get this over..." he said grouchy, peering out.

To his initial frustration, it looked like the action had already started while those kids were giving him that unnecessary roughhousing. But that frustration increased dramatically when he saw what exactly was going on. "I don't believe it. They're using infiltrator droids, the ones I thought of! I bet they aren't even crediting me for that. And they're trying to grab Chloe, that is too much."

"Wait! What about the...plan," said Astrid before NegaMorph began heading down the hill with murder in mind.

"Guys, I think we better start before things get too out of control," said Fishlegs. The others nodded before noticing a load of boulders...

...

"So let me guess, gonna go for double?" said Chloe nastily, only to look surprised as Anton, after a pause, said into his comm. "Omega, stop looking for Lynch, we're letting him go."

"Ant...can...ba...ignal...reak...up," came OmegaMorph's reply with plenty of static that was possibly fake.

"OmegaMorph, you stand down right now!" snapped Anton before looking surprised as a very childish raspberry came over the airwaves before the comm went dead. "That arrogant, foolhardy..." growled Anton before turning to his men and saying, "Get her inside. I don't want any more prisoners slipping out."

"Yes sir," said a trooper, the group walking to drag Chloe and her companions inside when an angry roar was heard, sounding like 'thieves'.

"And then my day got worse," muttered Anton, recognizing the voice. The troopers turned around to shoot at the intruder, but they kept getting hit from the other side by shadows or fangs. "NegaMorph, I haven't seen you since you got broken down for lab juice," taunted Anton, readying a sonic blast.

"And you won't see me for a while yet," said NegaMorph's voice before something whipped Anton's legs from under him.

Anton went sprawling, the air knocked out of his lungs with an 'oomph'. "OmegaMorph...we have trouble up here...your prototype€|" he hissed into his comm.

"And that's my cue to leave," said NegaMorph's voice.

A sonic blast shot out at the sound of the voice then. "Not yet. I've wanted to see this for a bit," said Anton, adding "Or are you leaving your friends to my tender mercies?"

"Aren't they here yet?" asked NegaMorph's voice, "Don't tell me they're hanging back. Are they going to chip in on any of the work?"

"What?" asked Anton before a rumbling got his attention, he and NegaMorph turning to see several boulders rolling down and hitting the marauders' assembled vehicles.

"You've built your vehicles to withstand enemy fire but they get squashed by big rocks?" said NegaMorph, "Lame."

"SHUT UP! OmegaMorph, pick up!" snapped Anton, tossing a sonic blast out again.

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"The number you have dialed is unavailable," said OmegaMorph in response, grinning as he peered down the tunnel. The stupid human didn't even know OmegaMorph was on his tail, happily jabbering away with the other escapee. So what if his prototype was at the camp? OmegaMorph could squish NegaMorph any time he wanted. It would be too simple a challenge. Anton could take care of the trivial

stuff.

"OMEGA-!" began Anton before OmegaMorph crushed his comm with an air of boredom.

"Boring show anyway," he muttered before continuing to follow, turning the corner and coming face to face with Matt.

"Lynch, so you've returned back to your beastly roots once more," said OmegaMorph, "In that case why aren't you tilling in the fields or being studied in a laboratory?" Matt glared before opening his mouth and burping a plasma blast over OmegaMorph. "Breath mint needed?" rasped OmegaMorph.

"You know, you're even more politically incorrect than your prototype," said Matt.

OmegaMorph glared. "Nukes don't need to worry about being politically corre-" he began only for Matt to go "You talk too much too." before blasting OmegaMorph down the tunnel.

Matt turned back to Hiccup and said, "That won't keep him very long. We need to get the others out quick. Lucky he didn't see you too." Matt started digging around before trying up again.

At this point, Matt was expecting to dig up into the munitions tent rather than the pens, which Matt would have ignited just for spite. So he was pleasantly surprised when he popped out of the ground right in front of Kala.

"_Matt?"_ she said, Matt doing a few mental celebrations that the nanites had decided to keep his new bilingual skills intact for now.

Matt shrugged. "I brought Toothless a present," he said, helping Hiccup out.

"_What took you so long?"_ asked Toothless.

"I took a wrong turn at Albuquerque, ok?" snapped Matt.

Toothless looked confused at that, Kala sighed. "_Stop confusing my darling,"_ she said, Matt's eye twitching, though he didn't go kill-crazy this time.

"Ok, let's get out of here before they come back," said Hiccup, "I get the feeling they won't bother with us back in cages if they catch us."

A laser bolt shot out at that. "You're right, we won't," said Alicia, walking into view. The sound of a large fight could be heard outside and the troopers with her looked battered...and pretty pissed, if the dragonbuster rifles were any indication.

Matt growled at Alicia and said, "I've got a score to settle with you, particularly with telling a bunch of misleading lies."

"Really? What lies were those?" said Alicia.

"Oh, just the lies about having my girlfriend captive which kept me

looking everywhere except where I was supposed to," snapped Matt.

"Yeah, that was fun while it lasted," said Alicia, before pulling out a dragonbuster pistol and firing. Starflame let out a howl of shock as Matt was crumpled, bleeding profusely from one side. "Oh shut up or you're next, Kala," snapped Alicia.

"What? That's Kala?!" asked Hiccup with shock, looking at Starflame.

"Surprise, now move," snapped Alicia, not even blinking as Toothless snarled, her men raising their rifles.

"You do realize that Chloe's never going to cooperate now, right?" said Hiccup.

"Like I care. She's already caught," said Alicia in a bored tone, nobody noticing Matt starting to twitch...and move.

As the troopers were pushing Hiccup towards the door, suddenly one of them started screaming, "ZOMBIE DRAGON! ZOMBIE DRAGON!"

The group turned in horror to see Kala and Toothless naturally backing up from Matt, who had dragged himself to his feet, his eyes glowing pure blue. "What are you standing there for? SHOOT HIM!" snapped Alicia.

"But we didn't bring suitable rounds for undead," protested one trooper.

"He's not dead, you idiots!" snapped Alicia, "I don't know how he survived that shot but make him really dead now!"

The two guards began firing as Alicia dragged Hiccup away. Sadly for her mental state, she was still able to see her men when Matt retaliated, a blast of plasma engulfing them, leaving nothing but vapor and a hole in the cell.

Toothless and Kala took the opportunity to start fighting for their freedom, blasting at the guards that were too preoccupied with Matt. Matt however had gone after Alicia. His brain was naturally in shock...and in a lot of pain too but what was coming through was that Alicia was something that needed to be made into either toe jam or a barbeque briquette.

There wasn't very much to get in his way, most things bursting into flames as soon as he got close. His brain noted that one such object complained, "Oh this is the thanks I get? Smeghead." though Matt paid it no attention, choosing to focus on his target instead.

He was getting close when a wall of sound knocked him over. "Lynch, you're not going anywhere. I'll be damned if I'm leaving empty handed...Lynch?" roared Anton, pausing when Matt didn't even react, simply getting back up and continuing, a charging bot melting as it got too close.

But then Anton's attention was broken by several sharp spines landing in the ground in front of him. "What the-" he started before looking up and having to jump aside to avoid being hit by a ball of molten

rock.

"Oh please, this is turning into a very bad DAY!" he snapped, sending a few halfhearted blasts before yelling "OMEGAMORPH! GET YOUR ARSE OUT HERE NOW!" He didn't even get static that time. As far as he could tell, it didn't even get through. "OmegaMorph?" he asked before he noticed that Matt was walking towards Chloe. "Oh...shit," he muttered as he saw the plexicuffs starting to melt

...

Chloe couldn't help but be a little unnerved by Matt's current state. This seemed like one of those states where he couldn't tell friend from foe. However there was a plus side, as soon as Matt had passed...the plastic gloves were off. "Oohh AAANTOOOOON!" she called with a vicious tone

As Chloe was marching over to give Anton his delayed comeuppance, she had to jump to the side to avoid being speared by a spine. "Hey! I don't interrupt your righteous revenges!" snapped Chloe.

"Sorry about that," called Astrid.

Anton however had managed to exit stage left, a winged shape vanishing into his ship which was already powering up. "Running? In a ship full of electricity?" said Chloe with a smirk, her eyes starting to glow as several clouds began to form around the rising vessel.

...

"Get us outta here now!" snapped Anton to a navigator droid.

"Electromagnetic field detected, systems...clouding..." said the droid.

"No...nononono...what the," snapped Anton as a fireball burnt out of one of the many 'Matt holes' and a dazed OmegaMorph splatted on the windshield, groaning "Say it and die."

"Well, at least I'm not the only one that's gonna fry," said Anton.

...

Chloe cackled like a lunatic as Anton's ship was pelted with lightning bolts before something finally exploded and it fell down out of sight, spewing smoke. "Ah...you gotta love karma," she chuckled before an agonized and cut off scream brought her back to a big problem. "Oh yeah, homicidal rampaging bro," she muttered.

Matt's trail wasn't too hard to follow. The smoldering pawprints aside, the flaming debris on either side was pretty clear. She turned the corner to find a half conscious Kala and Toothless. She'd seen Matt when Draconus came out to play and the sign they were breathing was a sign that Draconus was still locked up but they'd also been surgically taken out the equation if the plasma burns were any indication, Toothless trying to push himself up as she

watched.

"Don't get up right now. Nobody's in any state to abduct you guys," said Chloe, "But where's Hiccup?" Toothless simply growled down the path of destruction. "Oh no," Chloe muttered in horror.

...

Alicia glared at her backup plan. It was a toy that Anton had set up, a void gate, a hunk of Atlantean tech they had found. "Have you found Central yet?" she snapped to the tech working at the controls, what seemed like snapshots of different landscapes appearing as the machine flipped through locations.

"I haven't even gotten to Nullspace yet!" snapped the tech, "This is extremely technical stuff."

"Hurry up!" Alicia snapped, glaring at Hiccup who, along with her remaining men were staring with mounting horror at the approaching column of smoke.

"Ok, I'm finally getting something offplanet," said the tech. The view changed to a lunar view, a Cybertronian staring in shock before running forward.

"Change it, change it, CHANGE IT!" screamed Alicia, the view changing just before the bot reached them.

"CONTACT!" snapped a guard as a glowing dragon strode out the treeline, regarding them with soulless eyes. Even though Hiccup knew it was Matt, he couldn't help but notice that he was as terrifying as the description of the Flightmare in the Book of Dragons.

Matt stared at them curiously, not even noticing the ripples in him as shots impacted and went through

Alicia yelped as her men were practically vaporized before she grabbed Hiccup. "One more step and he's dead!" she yelped. Matt let out a growl that seemed rather indifferent to that threat. "I mean it!" snapped Alicia, readying her blaster. Matt simply opened his mouth, pulling air in for another blast.

Alicia had just about written herself off when an angry yell of "MATTHEW JAMES LYNCH! IF YOU EVEN THINK OF EXHALING THAT BLAST!" caused her to...well get equally as worried.

Matt paused and turned around to see Chloe in dragon form. "That's a friend over there that you were about to blast. If you're gonna kill Alicia, use a precision shot...and you don't understand a word I'm saying, do you?" said Chloe adding the last part gloomily.

Matt only just growled at her. "Ok, how did Matt snap Kala out when she became a flaming mass of rage?" asked Chloe to herself before thinking and adding, "Well, I can't really replicate that. Matt...would Kala want you to viciously murder that...person?"

The mention of Kala's name definitely gave Matt pause, but he soon started growling again. Chloe rolled her eyes "Ok, bad example...I'm your sister and I don't want you to," she tried. That seemed to be even less convincing to Matt who started charging his attack

again.

Chloe gulped before saying "What about the friend of yours that she's holding as a human shield?" Finally something seemed to get through to Matt as his charged-up attack started to power down. Chloe breathed a sigh of relief turning to glare at Alicia. "I'd let Hiccup go...slowly," she said. Even though the kid was her only meal ticket, Alicia reluctantly removed her arm from around Hiccup.

"Good...now put the-" began Chloe before Matt spat a blast of energy at Alicia, incinerating her. Chloe looked at what little ashes were left of Alicia before shrugging and said, "Oh well. She had that coming. You can power down now, Matt." Matt however was turning to fix them with the same hostile glare. "Erm...Matt?" said Chloe weakly.

...

Kala groaned, coming too to see Toothless nudging her. _"What did I miss, mum?"_ she groaned.

"The destruction of the camp, the death of all the marauders, and Matt's about to do the same to us," said Toothless frantically.

"WHAT?" Shrieked Kala, an explosion heard in the background.

"He's turned elemental again, but I think it's worse than before," said Toothless.

"Dammit, dammit, dammit!" Kala swore, pushing past Toothless and heading in the direction of the explosions.

It was pretty hard to miss where all the excitement was, since Matt was trying to blast everything moving.

Kala skid to a halt just in time to avoid a blast Matt spat out, Matt turning to glare at him and hissing like boiling water. _"Matt, stop this!"_ yelled Kala, hoping that Matt could still understand her. Matt just hissed angrily, spitting another plasma bolt as several spines from Stormfly were incinerated from the heat coming off him

"Matt, listen to me. You can't let this power control you. It'll keep burning higher and higher until there's nothing left of you," yelled Kala. Matt headed forward, readying a plasma bolt before pausing, glaring closer at her. _"Matt, I know all this anger isn't just against Alicia, Anton, and everyone who's been after us today. I've caused this too. I was so angry about how long it took you to see who I was that I didn't realize I was causing you pain too,"_ said Kala.

Matt tilted his head, in a confused motion. _"I admit I might have gone too far with tormenting you, namely with trying to snuggle that hunky Toothless..."_ Matt's growl quickly put Kala back on track. _"But I do want to forgive you for hurting me if you can forgive me for hurting you. Please,"_ said Kala tearing up a bit as Matt readied another plasma blast, probably meant for her before he fired it skywards instead.

Kala looked as Matt as he started to glow. Not the same glow as his plasma powers, but a brighter kind that seemed more mystic in nature. There was a flash of light and a cloak floated off Matt, now back in his proper Avalarian form, Matt hearing "Hostile magi source neutralized."

"Oh...my head..." groaned Matt.

Kala just nuzzled him, the bilingual abilities having gone apparently. Matt settled for nuzzling her back. Chloe flew up to them and said, "As much as I hate to break up this love fest, I think the kids need a bigger explanation."

"They can wait. I've been looking long enough," said Matt, glaring at Chloe.

NegaMorph flew up and said, "Hey, we could salvage some of this stuff for the battlecruiser when it cools down. Assuming any of it's still useable." He noticed Matt and Kala nuzzling and asked, "Did I miss something here? Why's Matt cuddling Starflame? I thought we were still looking for Kala."

"Starflame IS Kala," said Chloe.

"What? Kala is..." NegaMorph slapped his forehead and said, "Duh! Of course she's Kala. If it were a snake it would have bitten me." Kala, annoyed by the interruptions, chomped down on NegaMorph's head and shook him around. "Walked right into that one, didn't I?" came NegaMorph's muffled voice.

"Kala, I wanted to try this. PULL!" Matt said, Kala throwing NegaMorph into the sky who said "Don't even think-" which was as far as he got before a plasma blast hit him.

"Ok, you've made your point," said Chloe, "I guess I'll go debrief the kids."

...

A burst of shadow heralded the return of the kids and the missing dragons, just in time too as the stun grenade was finally wearing off naturally.

Snotlout sat up and yawned, "Boy, I had a really weird dream... Wait, wasn't I at the docks?"

Matt, who had caught a shadow warp back, was pale, luckily in human form. "Never...again...what the hell happened to Snotlout?" said Matt, looking at the paint covering Snotlout's face. He looked like a packet of Skittles had vomited on him.

"Oh, not much," said Tuffnut, "We didn't have much time to do much."

Matt looked at the twins before back at Snotlout before his brain decided to stop bothering. "Ok...never mind," he said with a sigh.

"Well, I suppose the only thing we'll have to explain is why everyone

ended up sleeping through most of the day," said Hiccup, looking around.

"Tired from overwork?" suggested NegaMorph.

Hiccup shrugged and said, "Most of them probably will have thought of their own excuse anyways."

"The human mind, we're so lazy," said Matt happily.

"So what about that new dragon?" asked Snotlout.

"Hi," said Matt, waving, "I'm right here. On a related note, your gods have evil senses of humor."

"I heard that," said a familiar voice. Matt spun around to see Freya.

"See?! I told you they get sick kicks! Why are you not looking?" asked Matt, noticing that only Kala had turned to look.

"Oh COME ON...TIME FREEZING? I thought only Mr. Black was that cliché," said Matt, annoyed

"It's useful when we want a private word and don't have to stop answer passerby's every little question," said Freya.

"Just so you know, me and Kala despise you to a level that only the old NegaMorph once held," said Matt casually.

"Look, I wasn't the one who turned her into a dragon. I was just offering a simpler way of finding her since you weren't able to do so yourself. The marauders were an unforeseen coincidence," said Freya.

"Unforeseen? Bullcrap. Gods see everything! Of course you saw them!" snapped Matt.

"The Fates had left a small chance that this event would happen. Which could have prevented by you making a wiser decision which you didn't," said Freya, "And to save you a night of brain-picking, it was trusting your message to the Ultimate Fool."

"Morph will suffer," said Matt and Kala in unison, though neither understood the other.

"Oh, for much more than that," said Freya, "But that suffering could have been mitigated as well several other times. Your immortal friends informed me that there was a higher reason for Kala's predicament. Another reason was a test for your relationship. And while Matt's love has proven true, his wisdom is sadly lacking."

"OI, right here!" snapped Matt.

"Yes, so I don't have to repeat myself," said Freya.

"You know, you're not sounding much like a goddess of love," said Matt.

"Well, flowery talk doesn't really cross your border very quickly," said Freya. Matt opened his mouth to retort before finally conceding that points, albeit reluctantly.

"Fortunately for you two, that higher calling is not too far off now. Once that's over, she shall be restored to her rightful form. Should be about the same time you've dug your ship out of the ice and got it working again," said Freya.

"You know about that?" said Matt bluntly before trying something, "You wouldn't mind telling me what's in the base's cellar would you? The door's locked by a containment door."

Freya frowned and said, "Normally I'd tell you not to look in the basement, but that would probably go unheeded. Since you'll eventually go down there, I'll have to say only go there when you're ready. Once unearthed, things will be quickly set in motion."

"What kind of things? I am not having another soul stone incident like on Avalar," snapped Matt.

"Technically, what's down there is not bad, but it'll attract those who will have less than peaceful intentions," said Freya.

"Oh, so it's the old fashioned 'horrible doom from the dawn of time'," said Matt gloomily.

"Not that far back, but quite ancient," said Freya, "But you might have another problem before that happens."

"What kind of problem?" began Matt before Freya vanished, time returning.

"YOU DUMB BLONDE ARMTWISTER!" yelled Matt.

"What was that?" asked Astrid coldly.

"Not you, Freya, the pain in the arse warned me of terribleness and didn't bother to tell me what was coming," said Matt manically.

The kids gave each other disbelieving looks before Astrid said, "Ok, you've had a very stressful day. I think you need to go lie down and relax."

"It's true! I'M NOT CRAZY!" snapped Matt, before Kala gripped his trouser leg and started dragging him away. "I'll talk with you guys later, my jealous girlfriend wants more attention," called Matt.

...

One flight trip later, Matt and Kala were back at the base. Morph just happened to be outside when they landed. "Hi Matt, how was your day?" asked Morph.

Matt and Kala both growled at Morph, Matt snarling "What happened to the letter I gave you?"

"Letter?" asked Morph.

"The piece of paper I told you to show to the others," growled Matt.

"Oh...we made some dollys from it," said Morph, showing his string of paper Stitch cutouts. Matt spasmed at that as Kala, despite everything began laughing

"So what have you been doing today?" asked Morph.

"Asides from being kidnapped and going elemental on all the marauders, I've found Kala," said Matt through gritted teeth.

"Good, where was she?" asked Morph.

"Turns out she's actually Starflame here," said Matt, gesturing towards Kala.

"Oh yeah, I forgot that," said Morph.

"YOU KNEW?!" snapped Matt, squeezing Morph.

"I think she told me a few times, but then something interesting happens like- Ooh, sparkly ice!" Morph stared at the iceberg before asking, "What were we talking about again?"

Matt twitched before starting to snigger madly. Morph giggled and said, "Aren't you in a happy mood?"

The explosion was apparently heard all the way in Berk...

...

The island that the Red Death had occupied had been abandoned since its death, even other dragons avoiding it despite the ideal location for a nest. However, it was not the memory of the Red Death that kept them away, but something else that had been kept underground for many years.

The North Star's final death throes had smashed an old cave network back open where, far at the back and seemingly out of place, stood a pair of stone double doors which were usually heavily barricaded and covered in runes, a situation the North Star wreck's scuttling had sadly solved, a huge crack through one set of runes which were inexplicably flickering with a faint green glow.

While the island had been deserted, if anyone were there to hear, they'd heard something scraping on the other side of the door and the occasional pounding. And the pounding was become more frequent.

* * *

><p>There's another chapter and we're starting to get some closure. Matt has finally found Kala and the Marauders are permanently dealt with. Of course, there's still the problem that she's a Night Fury and there's probably going to be other problems making themselves known very soon. Tune in next week to see what will pop up. Please review.<p>

****Voyagers Saga****

****Broken Nest****

****Chapter 11: Crew of the Drowned****

Night Furies are known to be light sleepers. They typically want to be up before dawn unless they're feeling lazy. This often means the rider of a Night Fury is also woken up, particularly if that rider is required for allow said Night Fury to fly.

This can usually cause much interesting reactions, depending on the rider. For Kala waking Matt, this caused his room to earn a new window when she decided the best method was to tickle his feet with her tail

"You know, you're perfectly capable of flying without me, Kala," said Matt grumpily.

Kala smirked before jumping on the end of Matt's bed, catapulting him out. Matt's angle of trajectory was just right for him to go through the new window he had made earlier. If only he had made it large enough for him to go completely through.

It didn't help that Techo wandered by, saying "Morning, boss." without even breaking stride.

"A little help would be appreciated," said Matt.

"I did it last time, it's someone else's turn," said Techo.

"GET ME OUTTA HERE!" yelled Matt.

"I'll send Wilson, I think he's got the next shift," said Techo.

Kala decided to do it herself by grabbing Matt's pants leg and pulling. Matt was pulled out with a popping noise before Kala nudged him. Matt glared "After that stunt? I'm not going flying with you."

Kala growled before chomping his head. "Though I am tempted to give your teeth a good brushing," said Matt, "Yech, do you eat anything but fish?"

Kala sighed before spitting Matt out at that and giving Matt the 'cute look'. "Argh, ok fine, evil little..." muttered Matt, as Kala looked smug

...

A little while later, Matt and Kala were flying out over the ocean. "I don't see why we have to be up this early. The sun's not even up yet," grumbled Matt. Kala snorted, slapping Matt with one of her ears. "Really?" snapped Matt

Kala tilted until they were flying towards the east. Matt noticed a red glow on the horizon and said, "Finally, I'd like to have a little light." However, about a few seconds after Matt said that, the

horizon suddenly flashed green.

Kala peeled off immediately at that "What the heck was that?" snapped Matt, barely holding on. By the time that Kala had stabilized her flight, the flash had faded and the sun was cresting over the horizon.

Matt sighed and pulled out his comm. "Control, I saw an energy burst near where we totaled the damn Red Death. We got anything on orbital?" he asked.

There was a minute's pause before WARDEN said, "I'm detecting nothing within the immediate atmosphere. Can you describe the energy burst?"

"Green, possibly mint flavored," said Matt, sarcastically.

After a bit, WARDEN said, "I believe what you witnessed was the green flash. It's a natural phenomenon that accompanies the cresting and sinking of the sun from the viewer's perspective into the horizon. About as much a threat as an aurora."

"Yeah, I suppose...but it was magic, set my teeth on edge," said Matt sarcastically.

"Well I'm not picking anything noteworthy in the area," said WARDEN, "If this flash means anything more than illumination, I'd ask the locals. Though I doubt they'll provide much insight."

"What locals?" said Matt

"The Vikings you have been in regular contact with since arrival," said WARDEN, "Unless there's someone else you haven't informed me of."

"Yeah, I can see it now. 'Hey guys, my omnipresent machine detected a green burst and wanted me to ask if that meant anything...why are you holding those axes?'" said Matt angrily.

"Your finesse is as appalling as your guessing skills," said WARDEN, "Just say that you saw a green flash at sunrise when you were out flying. If it means anything, they ought to know. Though I doubt they'll provide any scientific explanations."

"Fine...stupid computer," muttered Matt, cutting the connection.

...

By the time that Matt had gotten to Berk, the sun was making its way up into the sky. Although the sky was rather reddish this morning. He landed to see that the village looked nervous. "Ok...did I miss anything?" he asked, jumping off Kala.

"You've seen the green flash at sunrise, haven't you?" said Stoick.

"Yeah...I think I did," said Matt, not getting a good feeling of where the conversation was headed.

"The green flash isn't that common," said Stoick, "It says that it appears when something arrives from another world."

"Particularly from the land of the dead," said Gobber.

"Was there a green flash say about...3 weeks ago?" asked Matt, wanting to prod this.

"I think so, wonder if it had anything to do with those flying rocks?" said Gobber.

"Who knows?" said Matt quickly, pushing a confused Kala away.

"What's more concerning right now is the way the sky is looking right now," said Stoick.

Matt glanced upwards and said, "Red sky at morning, sailor takes warning."

"I know this one, red sky at night, the dragons set Mildew's house on fire again," said Gobber.

Matt gave Gobber an odd look and said, "Not quite. Where I come from, a red sky in the morning typically means that a storm's coming."

An inner voice said "Except we know for certain there isn't a storm coming. The weathers clear for weeks."

"We better start boarding up," said Stoick, "At this time of year, the storms are extremely wet and the winds will scatter anything not secured."

Matt paused, "Not all storms are to do with the weather," he said faintly.

"I hope that it's only weather," said Stoick as he and Gobber walked off.

"Please...green flashes do not cause storms," said Matt, not really believing it himself after what he'd just heard.

...

"I hate this universe," muttered Matt, looking at the torrential rain outside.

"Will ya close the window? The storm's not a welcome guest inside," called Gobber. Matt glared, slamming the shutters and yelping when one of them shattered. "Not again," groaned Gobber, "I thought I repaired those shutters after the last storm."

Matt jumped back at that. "Yeah...sure...bad iron...happens all the time," he said quickly, making a note to get a DNA scan later.

"Get something over the hole," said Stoick, "I think the wind's going to be picking up soon." Matt nodded, helping Gobber get a plank over the hole.

As Gobber was pounding the nail in, the wind did start getting

louder. The young children in the great hall were keeping away from the windows as much as they could.

"This isn't a normal storm," complained Snotlout.

"Yeah, where's all the thunder and lightning?" asked Ruffnut.

"That would be more awesome," said Tuffnut.

Matt however had finished helping Gobber and had stepped aside, the same problem coming to him too. "Ok...let's take a look," he muttered before looking confused.

"No anomalous weather detected...high grade magi detected in upper atmosphere."

"What the heck does that mean?" muttered Matt. Suddenly, the wind took a much different tone. It went from simply blowing to howling. And that howling was sounding less like wind by the second. In fact, it sounded more like something, more than one something, shrieking, wailing, and screaming.

Matt knew that sort of scream and he slowly switched to his comm. "Guys...do a scan for undead please," he said weakly

After a moment, the comm stated, though barely audible over the howling outside, "There are no physical forms matching 'undead' within range, but ectoplasmic activity and psychic feedback are very prominent."

"Oh...ghosts...even better..." said Matt, in a terrified voice. Then the shutters and board started rattling, almost as if something was trying to pull them out. "The hell is that?" snapped Matt.

The dragons didn't appear to like it any more than the humans and started roaring at the windows. The rattling of the shutters soon stopped and the howling outside quieted down into normal wind blowing. "Ok...what the HELL was that?" snapped Matt.

Stoick looked very shaken but he managed to say, "Something that I thought was only a legend."

"Ok, something has worried you. Therefore I am now also worried. What legend?" said Matt, nervously.

Stoick glanced at the little kids who were huddling with their mothers. "Not in front of the young ones," said Stoick quietly.

Matt nodded before following Stoick over to the corner. "Ok, let's hear the horror," he said.

Stoick sighed and said, "This story starts about a hundred years ago, when my grandfather was chief. In those times, we were still at war with the dragons. But we also had other problems, namely pirates."

"Pirates...oh, you mean target practice." said Matt. Anyone from Nullspace would forgive this as in almost all the major races of Nullspace, 'pirate' literally translated to 'target practice'.

"It was true that most pirates bit off more than they could chew with Berk, but that usually enough for the dragons to try to attack while we were preoccupied. Overall, they were seen as a nuisance. But there was one crew of pirates who were different from the rest. They were cunning, they were wicked, but most of all, they were relentless. And they were captained by a man who would never quit until he stolen everything of value and burned everything else: Ivar Kelpbeard."

"That's...an unfortunate name," said Matt, biting his tongue to stop himself laughing, though he still ended up grinning.

"Aye, that's what many warriors said at first, but he was a lot more dangerous than they would have thought. You might say that he was as bad as Alvin," said Stoick.

"Not heard of that guy either," said Matt, turning his back to put a note to find and taunt a villain with the name of Alvin.

Stoick sighed and said, "To make a long story short, he and his crew lay siege to Berk for several days. It took much vicious fighting before my grandfather and his men could drive them back out to sea. And to make sure they didn't come back, he drove them into the fogbanks near Dragon Island."

"The same island that used to hold a mountain-sized dragon?" said Matt, gloomily.

"Yes, when it was causing the dragons to attack us, we tried to retaliate several times, but the waters around Dragon Island are dotted with sharp rocks and almost always are covered in mist. Only a dragon could have guided a ship through without it sinking and the dragons wouldn't have helped Ivar's crew," said Stoick.

"So they're dead, problem over," said Matt casually.

"That's what my grandfather thought too. But when he got back to Berk, the wise woman made a very disturbing prophecy:

When the sunrise flashes green

When the morning sky turns red

When the storm winds howl and scream

Berk will be attacked by the dead."

Matt sighed "That means evil ghost ship of ultimate evil...right?"

"If only it were ghosts," said Stoick, "Ghosts can't touch you and can only try to scare you. But draugr are much more solid."

Matt's face went blank as flash training surfaced to the forefront. "Draugr...type 4 undead species. Usually an aquatic species, using naval personnel who have drowned in the line of duty as hosts," he said blankly before shaking his head.

"What was that?" asked Stoick.

"Uh, something I read in a book," said Matt.

Stoick didn't look convinced before saying "I didn't get most of what ye said, but you were right about one thing...they're the drowned," he said.

"Uh, sure, but they're just soggy bones, right? Nothing that shouldn't be too hard to take care," said Matt.

"Oh, they shouldn't be...if it weren't for the fact they grow bigger and heavier, can spread disease with their breath, and crush a man with their bare hands," said Stoick.

Matt gulped. "Mental note; break out the solarite gun blueprints from my logs," he muttered to himself.

"At least we have the dragons," said Stoick, "Fliers will be a great advantage against these undead pirates. And they don't appear to like them any more than we do."

"Then why weren't they doing so?" said Matt, absently, "I would have...I mean if I was a dragon, I wouldn't have bothered with roaring. I'd have gone straight to the roasting part of the event."

"Those weren't the draugr outside, only their spirits," said Stoick, "But they'll be coming here in the flesh soon enough."

"Oh great," muttered Matt, "They're probably planning their genius move as I speak."

...

"Why'd you make us leave sir? We's coulda scared the boots offa dem mortals." said one of the draugr spirits.

"Those Hooligans be harder to scare than ye remember," growled the spirit of Ivar Kelpbeard, "And did ye not hear the dragon roars? Those beasties nearly did us in once and I've waited too long to risk ruinin' our revenge for a little scarin'."

"But sir, we'z dead now. Wot else could they do?" said another spirit, clearly more intelligent than his fellows (though that was hardly a feat).

"Fer one thing, they could destroy our bodies and then we'd be nothin' but moanin' ghosts who couldn't hurt a flea," growled Kelpbeard.

"But we'z already ghosts," said another one.

Kelpbeard smacked him, a feat only possible among ghosts, and snapped, "We ain't just ghosts! We're draugr. As soon as the sun sets, we'll be pillagin' Berk in person."

"What about the dragons?" said the smart ghost from last time.

"I don't know what those scaly beasts were doin' at Berk, but hopefully they've softened up those Hooligans enough," said Kelpbeard.

"Didn't sound like deyz were fightin em," said Kelpbeard's first mate.

"What else would they be doin', cozin' up by the fire?" asked Kelpbeard derisively.

"With respect, cap'n. I didn't see any of their usual dragon defenses...and there was that weird sign over their arena," said the first mate.

"Then what be yer 'educated' guess?" asked Kelpbeard, not changing tones.

"We'z been dead for a while, sir. The world's changed. Who'z to say dat dragon wars still goin? Where's dat Red Death for a start?" said the first mate calmly.

"Right... And I suppose dem Hooligans have tamed the dragons like horses," said Kelpbeard sarcastically.

"So what else is dere to explain?" said the first mate.

"I haven't risen from me grave to ask questions. I rose up fer revenge! Does any of ye wish to waste any more time with questionin' the times or do ye want to have yer rightful vengeance?!" roared Kelpbeard.

The first mate would have rolled his eyes, but as his head was a bare skull, he simply made an inward sigh. This was the attitude that had resulted in them camping in the Red Death's doorway a century or two ago.

"Tonight, we sail for Berk! And we'll teach dem miserable Vikings what happens when you cross Ivar Kelpbeard and his crew!" roared Kelpbeard.

"Ok...ermâ€|where did we put the boat?" said a crewghost.

Kelpbeard gave that crewmember an annoyed look. "It's the large wrecked ship," he said.

The crewmember said "Which ship's dat zen boss?" pointing to the naval graveyard.

Kelpbeard look at the ships thoughtfully before grinning and saying, "We'll take as many as we can."

The crewmen looked at each other, one saying "Dey're kinda broken boss."

Kelpbeard smacked that crewman and snapped, "We're draugr, ya idjits! We can sail any kind of wrecked ship that we can!"

"Oh yeah...LETS GO, BOYS!" yelled one of them.

A mist spread out from the spirits towards the wrecked boats, which soon started moving more into the water.

...

"So how bad can this be? A name like Kelpbeard sound like something that you find in a seafood store," said Matt.

"Apparently he got the name from stringing strands of kelp in his beard so he'll never be 'far from the sea'," said Hiccup, "But he's a lot more dangerous than he sounds if what my dad says about him is true. Especially if he's a draugr now."

"So? We can blow them up," said Matt, calmly.

"As long as it's the dragons who are doing the blowing up," said Hiccup, "Dad probably isn't ready to learn you guys are from another world yet."

"That's cool, let's see the aim though. I doubt they'll stand still," said Matt

"Shouldn't be too big a problem for Toothless at least," said Hiccup as they entered the arena, "Ok, guys, are we up for some target practice?"

"Uh, Meatlug's not feeling so well today. I think she needs to rest for today," said Fishlegs.

Matt raised an eyebrow. "First time zombie hunt jitters," he said.

"Really, Meatlug's sick right now," said Fishlegs. Meatlug let out a very loud cough.

"Right, next you'll be saying she ate your homework," said Matt.

"It's true," said Fishlegs, Matt not buying it.

"Just blast something!" he snapped.

"Ok, Meatlug, try your best," said Fishlegs encouragingly. Meatlug coughed loudly before a large rock with orange slime on it came out of her mouth.

Matt jumped back at that. "Ok...that's just nasty. I said blast, not gob," he said

"That's all she can spit out," said Fishlegs, "And there aren't always rocks."

Matt winced at that before his eye took in that all the dragons looked a little ill. "Ok, who else has firebreathing problems?" asked Matt.

After a minute, all the other kids raised their hands. "It's all our dragons...except Toothless," said Tuffnut.

Matt turned to Hiccup and asked, "Toothless hasn't been looking under the weather lately, has he?" Hiccup turned to look at Toothless, who didn't look as bad, but did look ill as well.

"Stormfly can still shoot her spines, so she can still fight," said

Astrid.

"She has a point. The dragons still have their physical strength and that should be enough to take care of the draugr, right?" asked Fishlegs.

"Undead tend to laugh at things that stab them," said Matt.

"Barf can still make gas," said Tuffnut. Barf made a few sickly sputters before breathing out purplish smog.

Matt winced at that. "Ok...this...looks bad," he said, coughing from the smell of the new smog. The kids quickly started covering their noses as the stench. The dragons didn't react quite at first but soon started backing away from it.

"Ok, so what the heck is going on?" snapped Matt.

"I think the dragons are sick with something," said Fishlegs.

"No...really?" said Matt sarcastically.

"Are they poison-sick or just sick-sick?" asked Snotlout.

Matt looked around, "I've seen lotsa weird diseases...nothing like this though." He glanced at the slime-covered rock that Meatlug spat up and scraped off a bit of the slime with a knife. "I better have Lao take a look at this," he said, "If anyone can figure out what kinda sickness this is, he can."

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"It's what?" said Matt.

"It's nanites, a large colony of them," said Lao, over the comm.

"I know we gave them some nanite boosters to protect them from that Red Death's mind control, but we didn't give them that much," said Matt.

"I don't know, sir. They were supposed to self-destruct," said Lao, gloomily.

"What's causing it then?" napped Matt.

Lao sighed, "There was also a large dose of an unidentified virus, some kind of flu offshoot."

"Since when could flus cause disgusting slime build-ups and bad breath?" asked Matt.

"I think the answer can be safely stated as 'always'," said Lao dryly.

"What...happened? If they could have caught it then they would have ages ago," snapped Matt.

"They probably already had it. This variant seems weak against high temperatures," said Lao

"Then why do they have it now?" snapped Matt.

"Because I'm guessing this mucus is clogging up their flame sacs," said Lao.

Matt paused at that before saying "That's...worse than you think."

"You haven't been experiencing any flu-like symptoms, have you?" asked Lao.

"No, not a problem," said Matt.

"Well, unless they have decongestants around here, which I doubt, the dragons won't be breathing fire for the next few days," said Lao.

"Erm...what would you advise to speed things up if say...a zombie invasion was coming?" asked Matt

"Well, maybe if you can find a dragon with enough firepower to spare for a transfusion, that could speed up the mucus clearing," said Lao.

"Ok...I'll pull an Avalarian out my arse," snapped Matt, hanging up.

Matt turned back to the kids and said, "The good news is that the dragons just have a cold. The bad news is that cold is clogging them up too much with mucus for them to spit fire." The kids all looked ill themselves at that...well, except for the twins who grinned.

"So how are we supposed to cure them before the draugr get here?" asked Hiccup.

"Well, apparently these guys need to get a bit of spark from another dragon," said Matt, "Not that that's much good to us."

"Well, we can try getting some other wild dragons to help," said Snotlout.

"I doubt they have enough fire to clear this out, even if we knew how," said Hiccup.

"Great...dragon hunting," said Matt darkly.

"At least we still have your dad's dragon," said Ruffnut, "He's not sick, right?"

"No...he's been fine," said Hiccup before stopping, "He doesn't breathe fire. Maybe it only affects ones that use fire?"

"That and dragons who didn't get a nanite booster," muttered Matt under his breath. Kala stuck her tongue out at that with a smug look.

"Well, I guess we'll find out if Thunderdrums really can shatter bone," said Astrid.

"Hey, Lynch, why don't you try and find that Scauldron buddy of yours?" said Snotlout.

"Make me!" snapped Matt.

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With a scream and a splash, Matt landed in the bay. "That's a good throw," said Tuffnut.

"Yeah, been working on it," said Snotlout.

"I AM SO GOING TO-" began Matt before he was pulled under. Kala and Toothless flew down to see the ripples before Kala said
"Hello?"

Steampipe raised his head above the water, his pouch bulging and shaking as Matt tried to punch his way out.

"Erm...this is awkward. First, SPIT HIM OUT!" said Kala, screaming the last part.

Steampipe's pouch inflated more as it filled with hot water before he spouted Matt out like a fountain.

"Fine, ok...to business. Toothless, take it away," said Kala calmly.

"There's a band of draugr pirates coming to invade Berk and we need as much help as we can get. You think you can help us?" asked Toothless.

"Draugr? You know that draugr can't be harmed by water, right?" asked Steampipe.

"Ah, dammit!" snapped Kala angrily.

"What about your venom?" asked Toothless.

"They're already dead, remember?" pointed out Steampipe.

"Then why don't you just sit on them with your bloated butt!" snapped Kala. Toothless winced as Kala was buffeted by a blast of water.

"So you can't help at all?" asked Toothless.

"I don't like undead any more than you guys, but I can't do much with this type," said Steampipe.

Toothless sighed at that as Steampipe dived back underwater. Matt glared as Toothless and Hiccup landed. "Ok...I'm guessing we're not getting help from Mr. Chompy," he said.

"Doesn't seem that way," said Hiccup.

"Crap...I got eaten for no reason," snapped Matt.

"We'll have to figure something else out," said Hiccup, "For instance, just because the dragons are having sinus problems doesn't

mean we can't use fire. That's what we have torches for."

"Zombies are well known for bitchslapping anyone who gets close enough," said Matt, sagely.

"Well, I've heard that my dad is getting the old catapults ready," said Hiccup.

"This will not end well. We need to empty the village," said Matt, half talking to himself as all the flash training pointed to a hopeless situation.

"It was hard enough to get Dad to evacuate the village when the Changewings attacked, I'm not sure if anyone can convince him to do it again," said Hiccup.

"Point out the possibility of certain death and resurrection as an undead minion," said Matt dully.

"Well, that will certainly make him take the women and children out, but most of the men are still gonna want to fight," said Hiccup.

"Then we need to head them off, stop them making land fall," said Matt.

"I suppose dropping big rocks might do something useful," said Hiccup.

"That could work, crushing zombies works as well as frying them," said Matt.

"Ok, we'll load up on as many big rocks as we can find," said Hiccup, "I bet Fishlegs and Meatlug would know where to look."

Matt nodded, "And I can go head them off with Kala for a bit, buy some time."

"Be careful, draugr are meaner than you might think," said Hiccup.

"Oh please," said Matt.

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"C'mon you worms, faster! Berk won't burn itself!" said Kelpbeard angrily.

"Ye ever tried rowing half a boat?" snapped a crewmember.

"It should half as hard doing a whole boat," snapped Kelpbeard, "Anymore backtalk and I'll have ye keelhauled."

"But we barely have a keel," said the crewmember.

Kelpbeard sighed, reaching over and throwing the smartass crewmember over the side. "Now look, those dragons woulda attacked us by now. Meanin' we'll have a straight shot. Oh don't look like that. They're not gonna come out of the sky," he said before two plasma blasts blew apart one of the shipwrecks

"Get yer harpoons and bows, we're being attacked!" yelled the first mate.

"Find that flyin' lizard and make a sea urchin of it!" yelled Kelpbeard.

Another plasma blast shot down, apparently missing. Kelpbeard grinned and said, "Seems this beastie can't aim too well when it's rushed." His smile vanished when the blast did a 180 degree turn and slammed into the ship it had missed. "Don't just stand there with yer harpoons in yer hands! Throw them!" yelled Kelpbeard.

A blur shot by, going "Nyer nyer." before another plasma bolt annihilated a ship, a black blur shooting by with a familiar shrieking noise to Kelpbeard.

"Night Fury!" screamed the first mate, "Everyone take cover!"

"I didn't wait for my revenge for a hundred years to let a dragon get in me way!" snapped Kelpbeard, "Now start throwing those harpoons before I started throwing you at it!"

Her looked up to see plasma bolt shooting at him, before grabbing a crewman and using him as a shield. The bone fragments of the draugr scattered everywhere, the skull saying as it flew, "I could have just been a fisherman. But nooo...I had to be a pirate."

Kelpbeard snapped at that, grabbing a harpoon himself and looking for the dragons pestering him. "C'mon...AHA!" he snapped, tossing his weapon at the larger shape.

To his surprise, a very human voice yelled "YEOW!" followed by a splash.

"Haul it in!" commanded Kelpbeard.

One of the crewmen peered over the side before a yellow beam caused him to literally evaporate. "Yay...the solarite guns still work," said a pleased voice.

"Get the hooks!" ordered Kelpbeard. The draugr pulled out long wooden poles with metal hooks at the end of them and reached over the side to get a grip on whatever fell in the water.

A drenched human was pulled over the side. "A mortal...cut his head off, Bob," said a crewman who was surprisingly tossed neatly over the side by the human with apparently little effort, the human looking just as surprised.

"Where'd this human come from?" asked the first mate.

"Interesting question. We'll have plenty of time to find out after tomorrow night," said Kelpbeard before shouting to the other ships, "Regroup and head back to the cove! We'll take Berk out tomorrow once we have a properly holding ship and our men have been gathered back together."

The human shrugged before saying "Let me go or I start singing." in the same voice someone would threaten to cut someone's extremities

off.

"Ye think I can be intimidated by singing?" scoffed Kelpbeard.

"Ok, that's the legalities out the way...and a one...and a two..." said the human.

"What he doing?" asked Kelpbeard...before his world became one large ball of audio-based pain. "BIND AND GAG HIM! BIND AND GAG HIM!" cried Kelpbeard as loudly as he could.

After the human had been sufficiently gagged and chained to the far wall, Kelpbeard said faintly, "That...ain't human...I dunno what that was but it...was bloody awesome. Make sure he can't move. We got us the perfect dragon weapon right there."

"He's tryin' to get the gag off." yelped a crewman.

"Quick get something else before-" yelped Kelpbeard before the pain came back.

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Unfortunately, Kala lost the floating shipwrecks in the fog so she had no choice but to head back to Berk. Hopefully the gang had arrived with a translator that had been found during the last sweep of the ship. An old model but it should do the job the gang wished at least for a bit.

"Kala? Where's Matt?" asked Hiccup, as Kala shook her head, making it harder for Techo and Wilson to get the translator collar on her.

"Kala, we're not gonna have to play charades, are we? Because you know how likely you'd get a right answer from that," said Chloe.

Kala was snarling and yelping until the collar was put on and the gibbering became words. "They got him. They grabbed him, the little seaweed-covered sods!" she snapped.

"What? Matt got shanghaied by undead pirates? That could never happen," said Techo.

"They hit him with a harpoon, but they probably already tossed him into the sea. I heard him singing. He nearly made me crash from reflex," said Kala weakly, Hiccup and the others looking confused as every merc nodded in sympathy.

"Well, they won't be able to keep him long," said Wilson, "It's not like they have magical unbreakable seaweed or something."

There was an uncomfortable silence and Wilson said "Oh, you gotta be fucking kidding me."

"Anything else we should know?" asked Chloe.

"Well, I've heard that anyone who's made to stay on a draugr ship for a day will be forced to join the crew," said Fishlegs.

"Do they realize who they're getting?" said Chloe coldly before she muttered "Dunno what could be worse for them: us rescuing him or just leaving him to wreck em himself."

"You might not want him back if he stays too long," said Fishlegs.

"What could happen?" asked Chloe innocently.

"Well, he would be pressganged into a draugr crew and forced to serve on a draugr ship and there's a, uh, bit of a uniform policy..." started Fishlegs before Snotlout interrupted and said, "He'll become a draugr himself."

Chloe's left eye immediately went into a squint with a snapping noise. "Their souls will suffer," she said darkly, causing everyone to jump back a couple of steps.

"Er, technically speaking, they shouldn't have..." started Fishlegs.

"Let's not split hairs about this," said Techo, "We'll just find where they harbor and blast them to bits."

"Those poor zombies...but we do have to save Matt," said Wilson.

"Right...just need to carpet bomb the coves around Dragon Island," said Chloe with barely-held restraint.

"Won't that blow Matt up too?" said Techo quietly

"He's survived worse," said Chloe, her eye twitching.

"Ok, Chloe, why don't you sit down and have something to drink?" said Astrid.

Chloe nodded. "Yes...yes, let's go have a drink," she said to herself before everyone jumped as she screamed, "NO! IT'S MY BIG CHANCE!"

"Is Matt's...excessiveness hereditary?" whispered Hiccup to Techo.

"You could say that. Let's just get ready," said Techo gloomily.

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The draugr decided Matt would be best suited to stay in the brig, because it was the most insulated against sound. That said, they could still hear it. "Doesn't he ever shut up?" said Kelpbeard darkly, he and his lieutenants planning for their attack.

"We keep trying to gag him, but he keeps eating the seaweed," said one crewman.

"You'd think he'd get sick from that," said another.

"Have you tried hitting him on the head?" said Kelpbeard.

The crewman nodded, "Yeah...he laughed and carried on. I think he liked it."

"Well once the curse takes place, perhaps he'll be more manageable," said Kelpbeard.

"That's the thing, I think there's two people in his 'ead. Every time one of em gets corrupted, the other one pops up. When e's corrupted, up comes the original all fixed." said the crewman before twitching and bursting into salty tears. "DON'T MAKE ME GO BACK THERE CAP'N...PLEEEEEAAASE!"

"We'll use 'im to drive those Vikings nuts...then we'll send his soul to Hel. She can deal with 'im." said Kelpbeard

"Works for me," said the first mate.

"Make sure he's ready when we arrive. I think it's time I issue some demands," said Kelpbeard.

...

While the draugr hadn't made to Berk last night, Stoick had a feeling they'd still be coming so he was taking the extra day to make sure all the defenses were doubly secured.

Captain Lynch had sent several of his warriors along to help shore up defenses, his sister leading, though there was strangely no sign of him. The next morning however, just before sunrise a new problem was around...a thick fog covering the village.

Stoick didn't need Gothi to tell him it was no coincidence. Draugr couldn't attack during the day and there wasn't enough time for an assault before sunrise, but that didn't mean they couldn't cause trouble. He was checking the catapults again when a voice behind him in the fog said "So...the new chief Haddock. I'm not impressed."

Stoick reached for his sword and said, "Kelpbeard, show yourself."

"Ah, you know me, me reputation precedes me it seems. That's good. That means ye know that ye ain't got a chance in Hel of stopping me and me boys," said Kelpbeard's voice, this time from another direction in the fog.

"My grandfather was able to drive you off and he didn't have dragons back then," said Stoick.

"We wus breathin' then," reminded Kelpbeard darkly

"Even worse for you," said Stoick, "Because if you're destroyed again, there'll be nothing left."

"That's where I'm ahead of the game. Ye can't kill something that's dead," laughed Kelpbeard before saying "But I'm not 'ere to gloat...well, not much. I'm 'ere to deliver a little ultimatum. It'd be a shame if I had to tell me boys to target the caves where you sent the kiddies and women...right?"

Stoick growled and said, "If you harm them, I'd grind you down to dust myself."

"Yeah, maybe ye will, but they'd still be dead...or even better, part of me crew. I'm equal opportunities," said Kelpbeard, this time in Stoick's ear, so it seemed.

Stoick slashed out with his sword, but he didn't come in contact with anything. "See what I mean? Ye can't kill a ghost. Now then, you gonna listen or should I go away and let me boys practice their decapitation techniques?" said Kelpbeard cruelly.

"You can at least tell me what you want so I can spit in it," said Stoick.

"Ye hand over all yer valuables...and all yer weapons. Ours are a little rusty. We also get to choose some new crewmates. About...a quarter of the populace should do..." said Kelpbeard.

"Your offer has as much appeal as the back end of a Gronkle," said Stoick.

"Take it or leave it, offer expires when I leave," said Kelpbeard.

"It's not the only thing that'll expire if you come here," said Stoick.

"I'll take that as a no. I'll be sure to make sure ye kid's got a good job as me cabin boy," laughed Kelpbeard, his laughter fading away.

Stoick growled and said, "He's making a big mistake underestimating my boy. I bet he's working on a brilliant scheme to destroy those draugr right now."

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"What do you mean you haven't got a plan?" snapped Techo.

"I've been trying to work on something, but they keep going back to involving dragon fire," said Hiccup.

"And we only got one dragon who spits fire," said Wilson, aiming a thumb at where Kala was curled up, adding "Are you sure Toothless is out of commission?"

"I've been trying to get a flame out of him, but all we get is more of that orange stuff," said Hiccup.

"Guess he caught it too," said Wilson, pushing the furious Techo aside. "So...we got nothing? One depressed dragon merc, another being brainwashed as we speak, what else could go wrong?"

Just then, Mildew barged through the door and snapped, "Will you keep your blasted dragons quiet? A man can barely sleep with all the coughing and hacking and..." He paused when he saw the high tech that the gang had out at that moment.

There was an awkward silence for a second before Techo pointed and yelled "GET THE ANNOYING ONE!" before every merc jumped on Mildew, one stuffing his glove in the man's mouth

"Uh, Mildew knows the truth now. Which means he's gonna tell it to everyone. Oh, my dad's gonna be very mad," groaned Hiccup.

"Oh we can fix that." said Techo with an evil grin before pulling a glove out of his backpack and putting it on. "How many years do you want him to forget?" he asked, fiddling with the settings on the glove's control board.

"Wait, you can do that?" asked Hiccup.

"Yeah, you've seen Matt's attempts at lying, this is essential gear," said Techo before looking at Mildew and saying "Ungag him...maybe he'll be sensible and agree to keep his gob shut."

The glove was removed and Mildew immediately shouted, "Get off of me, you crazy pirates! I'll have the whole village throw you out!"

"Ok, regag, he's not gonna play ball. IT'S BRAIN MELTING TIME!" said Techo, happily.

"Uh, won't it look suspicious if Mildew lost all his memory?" asked Hiccup.

"Fine, I'll just nuke today's memory. Watch the birdy. Everyone else, cover your eyes," said Techo before he aimed his gloved palm at Mildew, a bright flash lighting up the room.

When the light faded, there was a completely blank on Mildew's face. "Notable side-effects include drooling, inability to eat properly, and, well, nothing that can't be chalked to senility. Now then, Mildew, can you hear me? You saw nothing when you came in here. Now go jump in the harbor." said Techo, evilly

Mildew numbly got up and walked out. "It also hypnotizes, kids...kids? Aw hell," said Techo.

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A little while later, Techo had gotten Hiccup and Astrid to snap out of it. "Ok, now that our minds are back in order, we have a plan to make," said Techo.

Astrid looked confused at that "What plan?" causing Techo to facepalm

"A plan for getting rid of the draugr without resorting to methods that look dubious," said Techo only for an explosion to be heard from the arena. "What the hell was THAT?" he snapped, losing it before stomping out. The others followed out to see a column of smoke rising.

As they ran to the arena, they weren't that surprised to see the twins there, nor Draco for that matter, covered in soot. But the smoldering bucket in the middle of the blast zone seemed to beg a lot of questions.

"Ok, what happened and make it good," said Chloe in an annoyed tone,

"Well, we have all those buckets of orange snot and we thought we could do something cool with them," said Tuffnut.

"By the way, it isn't tasty, it doesn't make a good seat, but you can throw it at people," said Ruffnut.

"So why was there a FREAKING EXPLOSION?" snapped Chloe

"Well, they decided to spit in it next, no idea why," said Draco, "So I thought I'd join in, only I'd put a bit more spark in it, and it went...boom."

"Flammable loogies?" said Wilson flatly.

"Flammable loogies that originated in the clogged up flame sacs of dragons," pointed out Chloe, "But we probably ought to test it again to be sure."

Techo sighed and said into his wrist comp, "Mac...get out here."

Mac popped out and asked, "Is it lunch time?"

"Erm...yes...we've got you an...orange," said Techo carefully.

"YAY ORANGE! Is it cold and slushy?" asked Mac.

"Er, yes, too cold in fact. You need to warm it up a bit first," said Techo, pointing at another bucket of orange mucus.

Mac nodded, spitting a fireball at it before anyone realized the flaw in the test. The bucket did indeed explode, though Mac probably put a bit more force into it than Draco did.

"Ok...that happened," said Chloe after a bit, blackened.

"Just how many buckets of that stuff do we have?" asked Hiccup.

"We got a few," said Tuffnut suspiciously.

"What are you thinking?" asked Astrid. "Don't you see? This is our answer. Our dragons might not be able to breathe fire right now, but we can use this instead."

"We're gonna use exploding snot?" asked Ruffnut.

"Think of it like Belch's gas, only sticky," said Toothless.

"Oh, that's awesome," said Ruffnut.

"This is gonna be the weirdest artillery in history," groaned Techo.

"It has to be among the most disgusting," said Wilson with a grimace.

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Matt meanwhile was still singing, though it had an element of groan to it. "Urrrrgh...I think I'm gonna barf," he groaned, pausing in his singing

"I told you not to eat all those seaweed gags," chided Draconus.

"It was that or choke. How else would we sing?" replied Matt, one of the guards asking "Who are you talking to?"

"My shoulder devil, he's telling me to take your head off," said Matt in his crazy tone.

"Oookay...someone go tell the cap'n that we won't need to torture him. He's already nuts," said the guard to his partner.

"Ah, but I like the torture. I haven't gotten to the modern songs yet," said Matt.

"Get another gag. Dis guy can't die fast enough. I hope 'is tongue rots," said the second guard gloomily before they both winced as Matt continued his serenading.

Matt's stomach churning caused him to stop. "Ugh, either my singing really is that bad or...uh oh."

"Here it comes," said one of the guards with an evil grin as Matt started making choking noises. There was a nasty vomiting sound, followed by a crab scuttling out from under the door and over the side of the boat from sheer disgust.

"Quick, get the seaweed, den we can tell 'im to shut it," said the second guard eagerly.

"I have to admit, dis is de cleverest plan we've ever come with," said the first guard.

The second guard stopped, looking into the basket that was supposed to be full of seaweed from Kelpbeard's...well...beard. It was how the shanghaied member's loyalty was secured. They had to eat it at just the right moment. However, it also had other uses...such as gags. "Oh no," said the second guard glumly as he realized what had happened

"We're out already?" asked the first guard, "The captain's gonna be annoyed about how much we've been using."

"We used em all for gags," whimpered the second guard, before they realized that, given Matt's sonic torture, it had probably been justified.

"He should have been swallowing more of it," said the first guard, "Not to mention he just barfed up a good amount of it."

"Won't be any use. How's we gonna tell the cap'n..." began the first guard before Kelpbeard said "Tell me what, ye lily livered lobster?"

"Hey, I'm a lobster!" snapped the second guard, who had the misfortune of being a simple crustacean that was on their ship when the curse hit.

"Aye. Sorry, phil." muttered Captain Kelpbeard before noticing the empty basket. "Ok...make it good," he said nastily before wincing as Matt began a new song. "Nevermind...I get what happened and somehow I don't blame ye."

"I swear he has a voice only a banshee would love," said the first guard.

There was a scream at that "NO! I'M NOT GOING BACK TO THAT PSYCHO-BITCH! I'D RATHER DIE!"

Kelpbeard shrugged, "Least he be eager."

"Think he'll be ready to 'perform' at Berk?" asked the second guard.

"Dat depends. I'll have to persuade 'im now." said Kelpbeard, nodding to the guard to open the door, though he looked uncertain about going that close to someone singing that bad. Even through the door it was torture.

Kelpbeard walked in and said, "I heard yer belly's been achin'. Ye've certainly made enough noise to sound like it."

Matt paused mid singing "Ah, hostess, I'd like to complain about the quality of my stay. The food was awful and the bed feels like I'm chained," Matt said snarkily.

"Well, we could move ye up to the figurehead suite, but it'll cost ye an arm and a leg. Actually, twice that much," said Kelpbeard with a cruel grin. Well, he was pretty much grinning all the time, being one of the few expressions a skull can make.

Matt shrugged. "So...is this the part where you make an offer that I can't refuse?" he said calmly.

"Yes, but I'd still win even if ye refuse," said Kelpbeard, "Ye see, we've lost quite a few crewmen thanks to ye. So me ranks need more fillin' and ye'd take up more than one space."

"Oh dear, you really think I'd work for you even if I was dead?" said Matt.

"That be the work were ye'd get to do legwork. Otherwise, ye can be me new figurehead. I'm pretty sure entire fleets will surrender if they see ye on the prow."

"Cheeky...if you get too close, I'll bite your head off," said Matt calmly, grinning and showing some very non-human dentures

"See, that's the very fierceness me ship needs," said Kelpbeard, "Just being draugr would be enough to make us the greatest threat in these waters, but adding ye would make us the terror of every sea in this world."

"I am part Avalarian...and that part is telling you to shove your offer up your butt," said Matt calmly.

"Don't have an aft to shove up anymore," said

Kelpbeard.

"That's...something I didn't need to know," said Matt.

"True, it was a bit of a shock to me too. Now then, ye can stay down here then until me crew have finished slaughterin' Berk," said Kelpbeard calmly, the two guards twitching at that.

"You're making a big mistake with that," said Matt.

"Well, I need as many of me men to pillage Berk, so I can't afford more than those two," said Kelpbeard.

"Not just that, I mean you're making a big mistake with going up against Berk. I've known them long enough to know that they're gonna beat you so bad, there'll barely enough left of you to make a pair of dice with," said Matt.

"True, if their dragons could burn us," laughed Kelpbeard.

"What makes you think they can't?" asked Matt.

"It's amazing how corruptin' we can be. I didn't even realize we'd done it till I saw the worry in their chief's eyes," laughed Kelpbeard.

"You are giving yourself WAY too much credit," said Matt.

"Oh, I be givin' meself plenty of credit. Ye seen yer reflection yet, matey?" said Kelpbeard smugly.

"No, nothing shiny to look at," said Matt. Kelpbeard drew his sword at that, causing Matt to yelp before angling it to give Matt a chilling reflection. Matt's face was not looking too healthy. His skin was pulled taught against his skin, his lips were shriveled, his nose was shrinking in and eyes looked more sunken. Frankly, it looked more like a skull than a face.

"Ye coming along nicely. All we need tae do is get ye scaly and we get to arrive in style," said Kelpbeard darkly.

"If you had a windpipe, I'd strangle you right now," growled Matt.

"Ye don't get a choice in the matter, dragon boy. Boys, get him chained up on deck. I get a feelin' he's gonna get bigger," said Kelpbeard.

"What about...it?" said the first guard, referring to the singing, only for Kelpbeard to make a slash across Matt's neck. Matt would have yelped, but no sound came out. More disturbingly, no blood came out of the wound.

"There, much better," said Kelpbeard.

The second guard glanced upward and said, "Ye get the feeling that someone somewhere is celebratin'?"

The slash seemed to begin accelerating whatever Kelpbeard had in mind, Matt wincing silently. "Now get him on deck. We're almost

there," said Kelpbeard angrily.

...

Following the twins' 'discovery', the Vikings were harvesting as much of the mucus as they could from the sick dragons and loading it into the catapults. However, Stoick wasn't completely happy with Hiccup's solution.

"Son, I admire your...ingenuity, but there something wrong about usin' spit as ammunition," said Stoick.

"Just think of it like Zippleback gas," said Hiccup.

"Yeah...wus never too comfortable with that either," muttered Stoick before walking off.

"You sure we got enough to get them all?" asked Chris, "Chloe will go berserk if Matt becomes boney permanently."

"Well, I think to free Matt it's not the draugr we have to focus so much as their ship," said Fishlegs, "Everything I've read said that draugr couldn't convert others into draugr unless they have a ship."

"Good, one thermite missile and that she blows...up," said Techo happily.

"We might to do something that doesn't draw that much attention," said Hiccup.

"Yeah...cause exploding spittle doesn't get attention," said Techo scathingly.

"I mostly mean you don't want to blow Matt up with the ship," said Hiccup, "I think simply smashing it will be enough."

"Oh, Matt'll be fine. He gets exploded all the time." said Techo happily.

"Ok...but it won't be my idea," said Hiccup.

Techo grinned at himself. "Great...revenge time," he said darkly before they began to notice the weather acting weird, a vast fog bank on the horizon.

"Here they come," said Hiccup.

"Ok, let's get this show rolling," said Techo, happily, wincing as the catapults fired a few shots into the fog.

There was a bit of silence before someone yelled, "Yuck, what is this stuff? I thought the gunk at the bottom of the sea was disgusting."

On cue, there were several flashes and whomphs in the fog before an angry shriek was heard. "That...doesn't sound like undead," said Chloe slowly.

"You think we blew up something we shouldn't have?" asked

Chris.

"Hey, I did say you should have just smashed the ship instead of blowing it up," said Hiccup.

On cue, several blue fireballs shot out, hitting a catapult each and scattering their crews before a draconic shape shot out the smoke. "Does Matt seem a bit more ticked off than he normally is after being blown up?" asked Techo.

"He looks thinner...as in anorexic thin," said Chloe before the group realized that, Matt was now more or less a skeleton...an angry looking one. "I thought you said he'd be back to normal if we smashed that ship!" snapped Chloe.

"Which obviously means we haven't smashed it yet," said Fishlegs.

"Oh look, ships, lots of ships," said Techo, pointing weakly to a dozen or so wrecks sailing out of their cover. The sight of them seemed to be worrying the Viking defenders quite effectively. "We need to find the one that Matt was on...or just sink them all," said Techo.

A marine seemed to have the right idea, dropping his disguise to pull a plasma launcher out before a rusted axe embedded in his chest, his skin rotting away rapidly before a skeleton fell in his place. "Oh...lovely," whimpered Wilson.

Just then, Stoick flew overhead on Thornado's and shouted, "Stand back everyone. Thornado has something to say to our guests." Thornado opened his mouth wide and let out a huge blast of sound that pulverized the draugr that was in its path. Matt, turning to look, hissed, revealing a glow down his throat before he spat several fireballs, hissing before chasing after Thornado.

"Just for the record, we'll tell them that dragon's actually a dead dragon that they found on Dragon Island and brought to life," said Chris to the kids.

Techo rolled his eyes. "And now we know our day's complete when THAT'S the sane answer," he muttered.

...

Kelpbeard had just finished smashing another barricade apart when one of his officers came to him and said, "Sir, our dragon weapon is working perfectly. Nothing they've got can even touch him. But those Vikings have been using more of their, er, sticky bombs."

"I'll be honest, explosive phlegm...that's a new one," said Kelpbeard, half to himself before turning back, "Well...just pull yourself together."

"We're tryin' but we keep mixing up our feet," said the officer.

"Well keep after it, we want this done before sunrise," snapped Kelpbeard.

"What if he breaks free? We kinda had trouble givin' him the seaweed at the right time," said the officer slowly.

"As long as our ship is afloat and in one solid piece, he'll do what we tell him," said Kelpbeard before turning back to the battle. However, they paused when they heard an extremely loud and shrill whistling, like the world's largest tea kettle was going off right now.

"What in Hel is...oh COME ON!" snapped Kelpbeard, watching as one of the escort ships was literally thrown onto the shore by an angry serpent. The crew on the neighboring ship barely had time to gawk or scream before they were squished by the water-inflated belly of a breaching Scauldron. "Sometimes it just isn't worth gettin' out the crypt," muttered Kelpbeard.

However, his concern started to grow when the Scauldron was clearly making its way towards the flagship that his dragon weapon was based at. "Oh no...don't ye dare. I took me ages tae find that ship in all that silt!" he snapped as the Scauldron got closer, ignoring the shots from the now panicking crew.

"KILL THAT OVERGROWN BLOWFISH!" yelled Kelpbeard. This order was aimed at all of his crew, but it was mostly at his skeletal dragon. The dracolich snarled before it realized that it knew the Scauldron down below. Memories shot to the forefront, mostly involving personal pain before revenge shot forward and it went into a dive at the sea serpent.

The Scauldron heard the wind whistling off the coming dracolich's bones and turned in time to spray water at him. The blast hit the dracolich dead center, causing him to screw up his dive and peel off to avoid a splash down.

The crew on a nearby boat was getting ready to harpoon the Scauldron before plasma blasts scattered them and Kala landed where they were. _"Steampipe, what are you doing here?"_ she asked.

"Smashing boats," said Steampipe in a bored casual voice.

"Of course..." said Kala before asking, _"Any ideas about which boat is Matt's?"_

"I was heading for the big one. Seems worth smashing," said Steampipe.

"You're not very smart, are you?" said Kala carefully, Steampipe replying with a 'dur?'

Kala sighed and said, _"Well, I think you might need a little back up so you can get there without popping."_

"Ok," said Steampipe happily, blasting Kala with some water and soaking her.

"I hate you," said Kala dully.

"Everybody says that," said Steampipe before moving to the next ship.

...

A draugr staggered back, phosphor rounds setting it on fire despite being soaked, Chloe lowering her blaster. "Find their leader and roast him!" she snapped. The draugr attacks had not helped her mood in the slightest.

"Shouldn't be too hard to find," said Techo, "Just find the guy with the beard made of kelp yelling orders."

"Ma'am...what about our cover?" said a trooper.

"Screw it! I'm gonna see why Matt enjoys going off the rails so much!" snapped Chloe.

"It's in the blood alright," said Techo.

"Erm...what about NSC protocol?" asked another trooper.

Chloe's reply was an evil looking sneer and her saying "We don't work for them anymore." as several draugr, chasing some kids ran into view, only to be fried by a hail of weapon fire from the troopers.

Techo turned to the troopers and said, "On the off chance that anyone notices, we'll dismiss it as draugr causing hallucination sickness with their foul breaths or something."

A draugr managed "I object to that...me breath be sea breeze fresh." only to be fried by a trooper.

"Anyhow, if you see more than one draugr, check for witnesses for a second before blasting," said Chloe.

"Yes, ma'am. What about the boss?" said a trooper, jumping back as Chloe snarled...literally.

Hiccup was looking at the harbor and said, "It looks like he's busy fighting Kala and Steampipe."

"So that's where she went," said Chloe, curiously before her radio buzzed.

"Ma'am...more boarding squads headed for shore...looks like their boss is leading them," said a voice.

"Good, divert the locals. I want to see the Jolly Captain myself," said Chloe.

"Yes ma'am," said the trooper on the other side, cutting off.

...

Kelpbeard glared as more of his men were turned to ash by phosphor gunfire. "Put yer backs into it!" he roared.

"We barely have backs anymore," protested one crewmember.

"And Wiggins just got his removed," said another.

"I'll show ye how it's done!" roared Kelpbeard before stomping into view...to see the gunfire had stopped, a single cloaked figure standing in view.

"Are you Captain Kelpbeard?" asked the figure in a distinctly female voice.

Kelpbeard glared and snapped, "What's it to ye, wench?"

"Just asking, it's polite to get the spelling on graves correct," said the figure, an energy blade igniting.

Kelpbeard laughed and said, "Ye think ye can cross blades with Kelpbeard? Ye'd best be off with a pair of knittin' needles or a stirrin' spoon."

"I was once feared as Silvia, killer of planets," said the female, in a dark voice as she strode forward.

"Urgh...kill this wench," said Kelpbeard in a bored voice, several of his men running forward before being made to do some impressive unintended gymnastics as several snipers blew their heads apart.

"Before that, I've stopped a megalomaniacal digital-geneticist, survived the disaster at Sy-Yong, and helped wipe out an infestation of symbiotes, but you wouldn't know what any of those things are," continued the female.

"No, I wouldn't," snapped Kelpbeard before cocking his head as he noticed something weird. One, that her cloak looked suspiciously leathery and was twitching...and that she appeared to have a tail.

"And that isn't even covering what I've been through most recently. Namely that I have at least one extra side to me that are very proficient at destruction," continued the female who now sounded like she was growling.

"What the hell are ye? Humans don't growl...unless they're Big Dave and ye block him from his meal," said Kelpbeard.

"I haven't been pure human for quite some years now," growled the female.

"KILL HER!" snapped Kelpbeard to his remaining men, who didn't dare move. "Urgh...ye want something done..." he muttered, charging forward.

"They say your soggy bones make you harder to set on fire," said the female, "But I bet you didn't know it makes lightning even more painful."

Kelpbeard managed to spot what was coming in time, pushing one of his men into the path of the thrown lightning blast. "Ye'll have tae do better than that. Ye think ye be the first lightning dragon I've killed since I died?" he roared.

"Did that first lightning dragon carry a sword that can cut through

anything?" asked the female.

"I'll admit they didn't," began Kelpbeard before hearing a 'shrik' and looking down to see his cutlass blade and then his hand fall off. "OI!" he snapped.

"Now, I'd normally like to chop you bit by bit, but I'm kind of on a time schedule," said the female.

"Don't you even think about...and ye did it," said Kelpbeard, the last part in a bored voice as his head was sent flying. However, his body didn't accept the message it was dead. Then again, it was dead to begin with.

The female walked past it, her 'cloak' unfolding to reveal they were wings as well as some strange armor. While her midriff was uncovered, armored scales kinda made that no problem. "What kind of spawn of Hel are ye?" yelled Kelpbeard.

"I'm just your run of the mill half dragon," sneered the female, before sending a lightning bolt at him. The water in his bones acted as a very effective conductor and Kelpbeard's various parts start writhing with pain before the clothes and kelp dried up enough to catch on fire. The 'thing' wasn't done however, tossing a pail of water at him. "Ok, release my brother. I can do this all night," she said icily.

"That was yer brother?" asked Kelpbeard, "Huh, I guess I should be surprised. Ye both be cut from the same monstrous cloth."

"Do you want to release him or should I keep setting you on fire till there's nothing left?" said the dragoness angrily.

"Ye haven't got the power to hold me down for long," said Kelpbeard before his body start swelling in height. It reached down and grabbed his skull and put it back on its neck which soon grew to catch up with the rest of his body. Then Kelpbeard towered over the female by at least 10 feet.

"Oh, how big, whatever shall I do?" said the female in a sarcastic tone before seeming to ripple.

Kelpbeard lifted up a boot and tried to bring it down on the female. A second later he was attempting to step on a much larger dragoness. "What sorcery is this?" yelled Kelpbeard.

"Technically, it's nanotechnology," said the dragoness.

"Don't matter. I'll skin ye just the same and then both you and ye brother can work for me!" roared Kelpbeard, lunging at his opponent.

...

Techo, Chris and the kids however were sneaking towards the docks. "Ok, perfect plan, it's the old 'cut the head off the snake' trick. We sink their command ship and it'll all go to hell, preferably before you guys run out of phlegm bombs," said Chris.

"That's most likely the ship that we have to break to free Matt as

well," said Fishlegs.

"Probably...the trick will be getting aboard it. We'll need to be sneaky," said Techo, feeling around in the shallows under the dock.

"They'll probably be pretty distracted with the big dragon battle," said Astrid.

"They'll still spot us unless we look the part," said Techo, finding what he was looking for, before pushing Snotlout in.

"Awesome," said Tuffnut.

"You have no idea what that was about, do you?" asked Chris.

"No, still awesome," said Tuffnut.

"Seaweed, there's tons of it under the docks. Cover yourselves in it," said Techo, hopping in the water too.

"I think they're smart enough to tell their own crew apart from people wearing seaweed," said Astrid.

"Really, cause I thought that if I wore seaweed, I'd look just like a draugr," said Tuffnut.

"Let's just get in," said Hiccup.

Chris nodded. "You got a better idea?" he said before jumping in.

...

5 minutes later...

Chris peered up over the rim of the ship to see organized chaos as Kelpbeard's crew worked to keep firing at the town and to stop the Scauldron from getting a foothold...oh and put out fires caused by crossfire from Matt.

"Alright, just act natural," he said to the others.

The group pulled themselves up over the bar, the crew not even paying them heed until one ran up. "Hey...slackers...get movin'! Those catapults won't load themselves!" he snapped. Chris shrugged, looking to make sure that nobody was looking before shoving a flare into the guy's mouth and kicking him over the side.

The other draugr heard the splash and one of them asked, "What was that?"

"Fish, get back to work, slackers!" yelled Chris, in a surprisingly accurate impression of the luckless draugr. The draugr shrugged before returning to their duties.

"Ok, I spot some gunpowder cannons, probably Chinese. That means explosives," said Chris quietly as the others got out the water.

"So we're just gonna blow up the ship?" asked Ruffnut.

"Yep," said Techo.

"Awesome," she said.

"Ok...go," said Techo, the group walked innocently towards the stairs to below deck...only for a problem to appear. Below deck was submerged.

"Oh boy," said Chris.

"I guess the powder won't be blown up so easily then," said Hiccup.

"Won't matter, a thermal detonator'll dry and detonate it," said Techo, holding up a disk.

"Ok, but how are we supposed to find them without drowning?" asked Fishlegs.

"That's the trick. Who can hold their breath longest?" asked Chris.

There was a pause before Astrid, "I'll get it down there."

"Astrid, are you?" asked Hiccup.

"I'm the fastest swimmer," said Astrid, "I'll be fine."

"Ok, if you're gonna do this, you gotta twist the center of the disk to the left till it lights up. Then you got 20 seconds," explained Techo.

"Right, you know what I ought to be looking for?" asked Astrid.

"Barrels. Given these guys don't eat, they'll be the only ones down there," said Chris.

"Got it," said Astrid before taking the disc and diving into the water.

"Oi...what's she doin'?" yelled a crewman at that.

The group turned to see a few draugr looking at them suspiciously. The group turned at that to see that Snotlout's seaweed had slipped. "Erm...yo ho ho?" tried Techo.

"I don't think these bilge rats have been rotted enough," growled a draugr.

"Oh shit," said Chris, reaching for his blaster before several other draugr grabbed his arms.

"We got some live ones 'ere," sneered one of them.

Just then, there was an ominous glow near the map before Kelpbeard suddenly appeared. "Cap'n?" asked one of the crew.

"The wretched she-beast ate me!" snapped Kelpbeard, "I'll have her

skinned for that." Then he noticed the gang and asked, "And who are these stowaways?"

"We're nobody, we'll be leaving." said Hiccup.

Techo nodded, "Yup, we're definitely not important in any way, shape, form or smell."

"Ye aren't goin' anywhere," said Kelpbeard, "I've just had a bad defeat and a couple o' easy kills will make me feel better."

"Erm...isn't that a bit extreme?" asked Techo.

"I'm an undead pirate, what else were ye expectin'?" said Kelpbeard.

"Rum drinking contest?" said Chris.

"What be rum?" asked a crewmember.

"Wrong century," muttered Techo to Chris before saying more loudly, "He meant mead."

"Just kill em," growled Kelpbeard before a splash got attention.

"I got it..." began Astrid before a draugr grabbed her, "Oooh...rats...erm, can we be excused in the next 20 seconds?"

"What's the rush? The party's just startin'," said Kelpbeard before raising his sword. Just then, there was a loud crash as Kala piledrived Matt onto the deck. "DAMMIT! WARN ME BEFORE YE DO THAT, MINION!" yelled Kelpbeard, Matt growling in response before Kelpbeard grinned. "Got a better idea, a good dracolich needs a nice diet of souls," he said.

"Er, cap'n, ye know ye only read that on the bottom of a mead mug," whispered one of his guards.

"IT'S STILL TRUE!" roared Kelpbeard.

Either way, Kala wasn't going to let Matt do anything he'll regret and tried to force him down to the deck. "Somebody net that Night Fury. Always wondered if they could go lich too," snapped Kelpbeard. "Really, we'd like to leave now. We...erm...can't swim, RIGHT GUYS?" Sapped Techo, glaring at the others.

Hiccup was the quickest to catch on. "Oh no, definitely can't swim. My metal leg will drag me straight down."

"Your girly friend swam," pointed out a guard.

"And how else could you get on this ship?" pointed out another.

"We...floated?" tried Techo.

Just then, a large tub of phlegm landed on the deck and splattered everywhere. While the draugr were disgusted, the others realized they

had a short amount of time to jump ship before the fire part came. "RUN AWAY!" yelled Techo, elbowing his guard before the gang scattered just as a flaming arrow hit the phlegm. "Ok...4...3...2...1...where's the bang?" yelled Techo

"I dunno, maybe you counted wrong," said Ruffnut.

"No, they're always set to 20 seconds...oh, fuck it, just swim. Swim like your life depends on it!" yelled Chris as Matt took off with an angry snarl.

However, just as the kids started swimming, the water rose up before them before Steampipe breached, finally reaching the flagship. "About bloody...oh, that's disappointing," yelled Techo before Steampipe hit his target, Matt.

The blow from Steampipe, coupled with a blast from Kala, caused Matt to spiral out of control and splash into the water. "Er, Matt can swim when he's only bones, right?" asked Fishlegs.

"Just swim before he has his first meal!" screamed Techo.

...

Matt roared as he threw Steampipe off under the water. As a temporary undead, breathing wasn't a problem...and he was getting hungry. And while Steampipe would be more than a meal physically, Matt craved something sweeter and not as material. He attempted to go after Kala, but found he couldn't take off while in the water. However what he was able to do was wait, once a swift elbow bone to the Scauldron's snout stopped it, allowing him to start moving as fast as he could, aiming up.

Kala was circling, around, trying to locate Matt in the fog. She needed him to still be alive when the spell broke. What she got was a shrieking dracolich suddenly breaching the surface to grab her, their trajectory landing on the beach.

Kala struggled to get up, but Matt was able to enlarge himself enough to pin her. _"Matt, no, don't do it,"_ begged Kala. Matt's response was to open his mouth and to seemingly take a deep continuous breath in

Kala choked as she felt the energy seeping out of her. She could see a bit of it flowing into Matt's jaws.

Matt suddenly stopped, the red eyeholes flickering to blue before they narrowed and he continued

"Matt, it's me, Kala, stop..." begged Kala, feeling weaker.

Matt paused at that, the eyes remaining blue before he did indeed stop. Kala gasped as her body strived to regenerate the energy that she lost, but she felt immense relief anyways. She shook her head to get her vision back and hear Matt making a pathetic whining, though it sounded more like claws down bedrock

"Matt, it'll be ok. That ship will probably be sunk any minute now," said Kala. Matt winced at that before he eyes began to slowly go back to red. _"Matt, now would be a good time to let me go,"_ said

Kala a little desperately. Matt jumped back before shaking his head and starting to growl hungrily again.

"Guys, what's taking so long with the scuttling?!" yelled Kala for all the good it would do her. Matt however, had gotten more than a kick from Kala. What was left of his mind now had a new angry target in mind, the annoying seaweed covered human.

He flew off with a roar, leaving Kala on the beach. _"Well, I'm not certain to be relieved or insulted yet,"_ said Kala, _"Probably should go with relieved."_

...

Kelpbeard yelled, "Get after them stowaways! Get some of those cannons workin'!" pointing out to where a crewman was pulling a sealed barrel up while others readied the rusted far eastern weapon

"I dunno, cap'n, those cannons look pretty rusted," said an officer, "And the powder's probably soaked through."

"I don't care. Fire at the town!" snapped Kelpbeard before stopping as he saw his dracolich take off from the shore with a roar, leaving what was presumably his first kill. "Ah, good, he'll be all fired up for the rest of Berk," said Greenbeard.

"Erm...cap'n? That's look like an attack run tae me." said a crewman.

"Attack run? Where have ye been learnin' them words from?" asked Kelpbeard before realizing what the crewman meant. "Oh no...I COMMAND YE BY THE POWER OF HEL NOT TAE BLOW UP ME SHIP!" yelled Kelpbeard, before a fireball shot out and slammed into the gunpowder.

The same fireball spread to the phlegm as something from the container beeped and said, "We apologize for the inconvenience, standby for detonation."

Kelpbeard managed "Did that barrel just apologize?" before the voice finished "Thank you for choosing Inferno Munitions for your impending incineration...have a nice afterlife," and then the barrel exploded.

The explosion of the flagship was particularly spectacular, sending tiny pieces of bones and wood flying everywhere. The explosion was enough to engulf quite a few neighboring ships too and the remaining ships started sinking with the loss of the captain and most of the magic.

Matt's was least spectacular, him simply stopping and falling into the drink, though a green glow from under the water was impressive as well as the stream of energy that shot into the sky and back to Kala.

Kala jumped as she got what energy she lost back. _"Boy, that feels a lot better,"_ she said. She stopped as she turned, realizing what had just happened. _"Oh no...Matt,"_ she said.

...

Chloe's team was cheering happily, luckily having hidden their gear again. By some miracle, they'd not been found out. Chloe however wasn't celebrating...she'd seen Matt's nosedive. She had already dived into the harbor and tried to find him, but she couldn't see a trace before coming back up for air.

She finally landed on the shore, shifting, with some personal surprising difficulty back to human in annoyance before pausing as she saw someone laying on his back on the beach, out cold. She rushed over and saw that it was Matt, looking more than a little waterlogged. "Am I still dead?" he rasped, not moving.

"Depends on who's angry with you," said Chloe, "Me, I'm a bit ticked off for you getting into this mess so recklessly so..." She poked him and zapped.

"Owâ€|" said Matt weakly.

"Now let's see how much Kala is angry with you," said Chloe before waving Kala over.

Kala settles for just licking Matt, right up until she realized he still tasted of sea salt and she just spluttered. "Is there any undead left for me to blow up?" asked Matt.

"No...you were the undead," said Chloe carefully, Kala nodding.

"Great, well, unless someone needs me, I'll just lie here then," groaned Matt.

"Not smelling like that you won't," said Chloe. Kala gave a snort of agreement and proceeded to pile sand over Matt.

...

The next day, the whole village was celebrating. It wasn't every day you beat a zombie apocalypse using explosive spit bombs. Of course, the buildings were torn up a bit from the attack, but Trader Johan ought to have enough material to make repairs with the next time he came around.

Matt seemed to have partially lost the plot, not surprising given his unrelenting hatred of undead. He'd become what usually sent him into psychotic rage. That kept the villages from getting too close to him. That and the draugr stench was proving hard to wash off with the limited facilities available. So far the casualties of his unstable nature were 4 mirrors, Mildew and a crab that he'd accused of being a soviet spy. However, it also came to a head when Matt was being barred from the feasting hall.

"I want in! I DEMAND ALCOHOL!" yelled Matt.

"Sorry, pal, but you might bring the draugr sickness in you," said Gobber, "Or at least the stench. And people say that I smell ripe."

Matt's eyes bulged. "ALCOHOL OR I BLOW THINGS UP!" he screamed.

"With what, your dragon?" asked Gobber smugly, pointed back at Kala who was enjoying the feast inside.

Matt glared at that. "I have ways of cracking planets in half. I demand my ALCOHOL!" snapped Matt, a patina of heat haze surrounding him.

Unfortunately, this made him smell worse and caused Gobber to stagger back. "Listen, Matt, if ye take a real bath and get a respectable amount of that stuff off you, you can get in," he said while holding his nose.

Matt glared as Techo strolled round the corner who quickly spotted the danger signs. "Erm, come on boss. Let's go get a bath," he said quickly.

"I've already had a bath! Three of them! I STILL STINK!" yelled Matt.

"But we've found a way of getting you hot enough water with enough pressure to get it off," said Techo.

"How?" asked Matt.

Techo shrugged. "Maybe it's that?" he said, pointing past Gobber and tazing Matt when Gobber was distracted. "Aw, he's fainted," said Techo innocently.

"So where are ye gettin' the water?" asked Gobber.

"Oh, he'll find out," said Techo.

...

Matt came too, tied to a rock at the beach with what appeared to be a steak from the base supplies around his neck. "They didn'tâ€¦" he said darkly, as ripples headed for him. "By my mother's grave, I swear I shall vengeance on every last one of... Wait, my mom isn't dead, I think," said Matt.

He paused as about half a dozen Scauldrons of varying sizes, led by Steampipe all surfaced. "Oh no," moaned Matt before they all blasted him. After a minute, they stopped and a soggy and rather raw Matt said, "I see you've brought the whole family." Steampipe nodded before he chomped Matt. "I'm still swearing vengeance, I just need of something to swear by," came Matt's muffled voice.

* * *

><p>There's another chapter. We've dipped into another part of Norse mythology. This is how draugr were typically portrayed, not as random animated corpses like in Elder Scrolls. Of course, the blowing up bit probably wasn't used in folklore. Anyhow, that takes care of the foreshadowing we've been building up. Or does it? Tune in next week to see if it actually is. Please review.<p>

****Voyagers Saga****

****Broken Nest****

****Chapter 12: The Wolf Moon Rises****

Trader Johann's visit to Berk, to him seemed like a blast from the good old days, when he'd done roaring trade with Berk for building materials. A brief chat with some of the Vikings on the docks had confirmed that the dragons weren't fighting again but surely the story of undead pirates could be true. That said, he still had plenty of things to sell other than nails.

Typically, only the older Vikings had enough to trade for the expensive stuff from distant lands, so it was rather a surprise for him to find the kids browsing there. "Can I help you?" he asked, before jumping as he spotted the teenagers with Hiccup and his friends, also looking at the wares with a strangely short Viking covered in so much rags that it was impossible to tell what he looked like.

"Oh, just thought we'd check out the more exotic stuff," said Hiccup.

"Well, that's nice, but you know you won't be able to pay for it," said Johann.

"The kids came into cash recently," said one of the teenagers casually.

"Did they now?" asked Johann, "Well, in that case, feel free to look around. I'm sure I have something somewhere you'll like."

The teenagers looked at their short companion who gave a thumb up, "All clear, kiddies. Nothing nasty."

"Who's your short friend? And the rest of you newcomers for that matter?" asked Johann.

"Captain Lynch. I'm learning some things here," said one of the teenagers.

"Oh, where's your ship then?" asked Johann.

"It's around," said Matt, calmly.

"Well, is there anything in particular you and your crew are looking for?" asked Johann.

"Nothing, we're...quality control," said the woman in a neutral tone as Matt wandered over to the kids.

...

"What ya lookin for?" asked Matt, a little childishly behind Hiccup

"Well, I was thinking of getting something for Astrid. Her birthday's coming up," said Hiccup.

"Ah, anything you got in mind?" said Matt, running his own eyes over the selection before spotting something. "Actually...go nuts," he said, wandering over.

Hiccup shrugged before pushing aside a large chest and finding an ornamental box covered in ancient Norse runes. "Johann, what's this one?" asked Hiccup, picking it up.

"Oh that? I acquired it in a port in Britannia. Washed up with some junk," said Johann before saying quickly, "And it's very valuable."

"What's inside it?" asked Hiccup.

"A jeweled amulet. Very expensive," said Johann, opening it to show a wolf head amulet with a red gem set into it.

"Wow, what's the story behind that?" asked Hiccup.

"Not quite sure..." admitted Johann before Snotlout butted in. "Astrid'll love that...I'll give you 5 gold paving stones for it."

"Gold paving stones?" asked Johann dubiously.

Hiccup sighed. "We, erm...got them on our first raid. I'll give you 10 for it," he said.

"Hey, I've got 15 and they're paying for it," said Snotlout.

Chloe sighed at that, spotting a chance for Hiccup being outdone by a nincompoop so she strolled over and 'accidentally' kicked Snotlout over the side. "Oh, man overboard," she said innocently, winking at Hiccup.

Hiccup quickly took advantage of Snotlout's 'absence' to hand Johann his bag of gold. "I hope that'll be enough to cover this," said Hiccup as he picked up the box.

Johann looked in the bag and his eyes widened at the sight of the gold. "More than enough. Would you like me to throw something else in with it? Perhaps a nice writing desk carved from wood from the Black Forest?"

"Isn't that place slightly cursed?" said Matt innocently, sure he'd heard stories about werewolves in the Black Forest.

"Depends who you ask," said Johann, "The Teutons tell all sorts of stories about the Black Forest, hard to tell which ones are true. But they do have trees that make sturdy furniture and houses."

"As long as there is no curse," said Matt before holding up something that everyone present but Johann knew, an 11mm las pistol, broken but still. "How much for this?" Matt asked darkly.

"That? Well...hard to put a price on it, mainly because I'm not certain what it is," said Johann, "I thought it might have been a dwarven pickaxe, but it doesn't work quite so well."

"Yeah...how many things did it make explode?" asked Chloe

carefully.

"Well, quite a few," said Johann, "It's made me a bit eager to get rid of it. I think it's cursed or bad luck. Or cursed with bad luck."

"We'll take it and anything looking like it off your hands...veeeery dangerous. Hold on, my dwarf wants me," said Matt, innocently, the short companion waving. "Something else you picked up?" asked Matt, "It's the writing desk, isn't it?"

"Nope," said the 'dwarf, really Draco wrapped up with enough furs to pass as a very small bear. "It's this," he hissed, showing a rifle device. Matt immediately spotted what it was. He had a similar weapon in his wristcomp...a silverbane cannon.

"You gotta be kidding, werepyres?" he hissed, both of them shooting a suspicious look at Johann who waved nervously and said to Chloe, "Are they ok...and are they going to buy anything?"

"Oh, don't worry, they'll buy you out," said Chloe.

"Oh, well then, perhaps I can interest in some jewelry I've picked up..." started Johann.

Chloe, who was mouthing 'quit it or die' at Matt and Draco, span at that and smiled, "Sure...why not? My brother's paying."

Matt called, "I'm what now?"

"Your brother mentioned werewolves before, which I don't really believe in. But I think I have something related to that subject that might interest you," said Johann before going down into his hold.

Chloe raised an eyebrow before Johann returned with a silver wrist bracelet, several gems lining around it. "Nice...how much?" she asked.

"Oh, this is a special bracelet, heard it was crafted for a princess by elves," said Johann, "I'm afraid this little beauty can't be sold for a small price."

Chloe said with a smirk, "Money is no objectâ€|" only for Matt to yell "I already spent my gold! THE GOLD WE WEREN'T ALLOWED TO TAKE, I MIGHT ADD!"

Chloe glared in Matt's direction before sighing and reaching for her satchel. Just as she was getting ready to pull something out, Chris walked over and said, "I can pay for it." He handed Johann a small gold brick and asked, "Does this cover it?"

Johann stared for a second, his eye twitching before he said in a casual voice, "Just the right amount...excuse me a second please." before walking below deck.

"You think I insulted him?" asked Chris before he and Chloe winced at the hysterical cheering from below deck before Johann calmly walked back up to the deck.

"Shall I wrap that up for you?" asked Johann.

"We're fine," said Chloe carefully.

...

For the gang, it was the first time they'd seen a Viking birthday party. Matt, finally free from his essence of draugr, had finally been allowed in and had already taken over the mead barrel, growling at anyone who got close.

"Is that typical for half-dragons?" whispered Fishlegs to Chloe.

"No, but that is typical for Matt," said Chloe.

"MY ALCOHOL!" screamed Matt, cementing that before inevitably starting the traditional brawl as the Viking adults decided to reclaim the mead.

"Personally, I think that stuff tastes like cough syrup," said Chloe. Astrid simply sighed at this, standing next to Chloe. "This happen often?" asked Chloe, looking at the bracelet Chris had brought her.

"Once and a while, my dad and uncle once fought almost half the village to protect their mead," said Astrid, "Of course, that was before my uncle..."

"Yeah, hopefully he'll keep the dragon strength on the..." began Chloe before a Viking flew over them, cheering before diving back into the fray. "Never mind, I forgot for a second that my brother's a gigantic MORON!" she snapped.

"He fits right in," said Astrid before looking at Chloe's bracelet, "That's a nice bracelet."

"Yeah, Chris got me it from Johann," said Chloe happily before adding, "Matt wanted to get you a chainaxe but we all decided that was a phenomenally bad idea."

"Ok..." said Astrid, "So, are you and Chris...together or something?"

"What? No...course we aren't," said Chloe quickly.

"Oh, it just seemed like-"

Quite to Chloe's relief, Hiccup had come over with a wrapped box. "Hey Astrid, nice new helmet," he said.

Astrid nodded. "Yeah, Matt and Chloe got it for me," she said.

Chloe nodded. "It can survive a 3 ton boulder," she said.

"Right, but that wouldn't cover the rest of her body," said Hiccup.

"Yeah...but name a time that a 3 ton boulder would land on you," pointed out Chloe.

"Fair enough," said Hiccup, "Anyways, I got this for you." He handed her the box.

Astrid took the box, removing the wrapping before opening it to reveal the amulet from Johan's ship. It had a large red ruby clasped in silver. It seemed to almost have its own light. "I love it," said Astrid happily, clicking it on, Chloe twitching a bit as the light seemed to catch the jewel for a second. She felt a bit of a twinge in her head, but she assumed it was from the mead.

"That stuff's got a hell of a kick," Chloe muttered staggering off before her wristcomp beeped, Matt stopping in mid-headlock as his did too.

"Ok boys, I've had my fill. You can have the rest," said Matt as he wormed his way out of the brawl.

Chloe however said to Hiccup and Astrid, "Warden's cracked the sealed door and it set off half a dozen alarms. We've gotta go make sure things are ok there."

"Ok, if you need help, uh, I suppose you can send some sort of signal," said Hiccup.

"We'll leave Draco here. He seems to be enjoying himself. At least everyone's too drunk now to notice he's not in disguise," said Chloe, the trio looking over to see Draco, looking absolutely wasted from some ingredient in the mead, yelling "IN SOVIET RUSSIA...MEAD DRINKS YOU!" before he fell backwards off the table giggling.

Chloe sighed and said, "We need to start bringing someone more levelheaded around."

...

"Ok Warden, this better be good. I had them on the ropes," snapped Matt.

"I believe it is. Something is alive down there," answered Warden calmly.

"Alive? We're talking about cryogenic suspended animation?" asked Matt.

"Not exactly. It's not human...and the energy it's giving out seems to indicate its self-inflicted," said Warden.

"It's not a big bug, is it?" asked Chloe.

"Negative, it appears humanoid. I would recommend an armed team. Mostly as it is on file...Codename: Fido for some reason," said Warden, ignoring as Matt sniggered.

"Alright, we'll be heading back as soon as we can," said Chloe.

"I would hurry. He's also giving off similar magi energy levels to you, meaning he is certainly in your weight class," said Warden.

"Oh, I guess we'll have just to fly there quickly," said Matt.

...

"Ok...does anyone get Sy-Yong vibes from here?" asked Matt, peering at the darkened corridors, he, Chloe, Techo and some marines walking through what had clearly been some kind of research lab at some point.

"More than plenty," said Techo, who had brought the largest gun he could carry.

"I'm sure that's not necessary," said Matt, who was holding his ion blade with a crazy look.

"Considering this thing is about your level in magi strength, I'm not taking chances," said Techo.

"Neither am I...you go first," said Matt, kicking Techo round the corner.

There was a pause before Techo said, "Nothing yet."

Chloe sighed and said, "Are you two going to be like this until we actually find this thing?"

The duo said, "Yes." smirking.

Chloe sighed and said, "Fine, I'm taking point."

Matt raised an eyebrow at that. "Hey, I'm the suicidally brave one. What gives?" he asked, peering round the corner.

"Well, maybe you're annoying me enough to be able to overcome it," said Chloe.

"Hey...that's a bit far. I've annoyed you for years," said Matt.

"Yeah, haven't you seen those horror movies where the chick goes first?" said Techo.

Chloe turned angrily at that. "Maybe I just want this stupidity over and done with?" she snapped.

"Ok, ok, geeze," said Techo before muttering to Matt, "What's gotten under her skin?"

Matt shrugged as the group arrived at a dead end, a heavy duty lift at the far end. "Ok, who wants to go down the elevator..." started Matt before Chloe glared at him, "Fine, we all go." Warden had already hacked the lift, though it was a slow bumpy and nerve wracking ride. "Ok, sis, something's got into you. Please tell me. Draconus is a living reason why stress for Shar-Khan is bad," Matt said.

"Nothing, it's just you two hyping up the paranoia with every step," snapped Chloe.

"No...something's up. You're starting to act like Silvia," said Matt sternly.

Chloe's glare deepened as she said, "Don't you dare bring her up. Silvia is deeply buried and that's where she's staying."

Matt just returned the glare, "Then drop the attitude before you hurt someone."

Chloe took a deep breath and said, "Ok, but it'd help if you two would stop your pre-panicking before anything actually happens."

"Actually, I'm just worried about how our luck with have something rabid attacking us any second now," said Techo nervously.

"True, this thing ought to have tried to escape this place by now," said Matt.

"JUST SHUT UP!" roared Chloe, her bracelet glowing faintly before she seemed to come to her senses.

"Ok, as soon as we deal this thing, you're on leave. You have got way too much tension," said Matt.

"I...yeah, ok," said Chloe quietly as the lift opened to show a cave, several half walls showing that people had once lived here, Matt noting that said people seemed to have had been in desperate need of having their nails cut...or that they had claws.

"Ok, we're in the basement. And if our so-called ally Freya is right, something big is down here," said Matt.

"For the last time, you didn't meet Freya." said Techo in a bored tone before he fell down a small pothole.

"Then where'd I get that smegging cloak that kept me stuck in non-talking dragon form for a day?" retorted Matt.

"Knowing you, the local store," said Chloe with a grin as they turned the corner and paused, seeing hundreds of rubies.

"Pay day," said Matt weakly.

"There's something...vaguely familiar about this," said Chloe, though her inner cash register was already ringing.

"Didn't you guys already go through your dragon greed thing at El Dorado?" pointed out Techo.

"FUCK THAT! THAT WAS A CURSE BY A BITCH! MINE!" screamed Matt, charging forward and receiving two feet to the chest as something swung down to kick him back. He was sent flying back and hit a wall. "Ok...as much as I need that, someone's gonna pay," said Matt.

"Erm...Matt?" said Techo, the group backing up as the attacker strode forward, a humanoid wolf in some nasty looking plate armor and holding a nasty looking blade.

"Oh? Is that all? I've seen worse," said Matt.

"Thieves...and minions of Hel. You have courage to come directly here," growled the wolf.

"Hey, I haven't stolen anything...yet," snapped Matt.

"Oh...and we're not demons, we're half dragons," he added triumphantly before a throwing knife shot into his leg. "And that's as bad...ARRRRRRRRRRGH!"

"You will not be stealing this stones, not while I still stand," growled the wolf.

"He's not standing," said Techo, innocently, Matt screaming about the knife being 'in the bone'. Techo added "Also...thanks for being still." before there was a deafening bang from the lift, the wolf's head whipping back and him falling back as Talia fired her new canister rifle.

"Ok, now let's have WARDEN look at these rocks before we..." started Chloe before the wolf started getting back up, his broken neck setting itself back in place as his head wounds healed.

"Oh, fuck this!" snapped Matt, everyone opening fire at once.

The wolf man was battered back, even if he was using his sword to deflect some of the bullets. But he was soon starting to march forward again.

Matt pushed Chloe aside, sending a plasma burst that winged the wolf, spinning him down.

The wolf snarled at that, this particular wound seemed to be taking longer to heal.

"Ok...so magic works..." napped Matt, shifting to his hybrid form. "Play nice or burn." he snapped.

The wolf looked at Matt and asked, "What sort of sorcery has Hel been playing with this time?"

"Don't know anyone by that name..." said Chloe, who had also shifted and was holding her ion blade against his neck from behind.

The wolf sniffed deeply and said, "Hmm...you lack the distinctive scent of her magic. But you are like nothing this world can create."

"Not from here," said Matt, coldly.

"I think we may need to speak more clearly with each other before more drastic misunderstandings occur," said the wolf.

"Yeah...throw him in the brig. Nobody sticks a knife in my leg." said Matt darkly.

"I cannot stay. There is important work to be done. I have awakened for a reason," protested the wolf.

"Tough, people who sticks knives in my leg stay behind bars." said Matt, nastily before jumping as the wolf easily knocked the two trooper holding him out cold, leaping over Talia and into the lift but not before she shot him with a tracker.

"Don't let him get away!" shouted Matt, "And someone help me get this stupid thing out of my leg!"

...

The wolfman had been asleep a long time but he'd made sure his hibernation spell was only woke up in one situation. "Who would be foolish enough to wear one of the eyes?" he muttered to himself, slicing the end of an attacker's energy weapon before using the handle to knock him down. "Fools...don't they realize they're tempting disaster?" he snarled, turning to kick another trooper down.

"Were the warning runes on them not explicitly clear?" he growled as he leapt over more troopers.

He stopped briefly as he heard angry yelling...the male dragon...thing yelling for...spiderbots? He looked around desperately before smelling fresh air, running for a ladder at the side.

He clambered up the ladder until he found a hatch that he was able to push open. He climbed out and immediately covered his eyes. The sun was starting to set, but it had been far too long since he had seen sunlight.

"Urgh...it had to be across water," he muttered, sniffing before his ears twitched and he jumped aside to avoid a lightning bolt. "That was a warning shot," called Chloe.

"I don't have time for this," growled the wolfman, "I have a mission to complete."

"Well...isn't it polite to introduce yourself?" said Chloe, the two circling each other.

The wolf sighed and said, "If you really need to know, my name is Fenris. I have a few titles, but I don't have the time to tell you about them."

"My name is Lieutenant Chloe Lynch of CPS. You tried to fillet my brother and that's really annoyed me; the crowning jewel on a bad day so you're going to surrender and tell me why you attacked us on sight and what this mission is that's so important," snapped Chloe.

"CPS...that sounds familiar," said Fenris.

"You won't have heard of us." said Chloe darkly, as several troopers came to the surface too.

"But I think I have," said Fenris, "Tell me, are you from a realm called 'Nullspace'?"

Chloe raised a hand as the troopers aimed. "You heard of nullspace?" she said carefully.

"I have met warriors who are from there. That was apparently a long time ago," said Fenris.

"Probably a LONG time ago," said Chloe coldly.

"Yes. My hibernations can span centuries," said Fenris before remembering the reason why he woke up, "But I need to be going. Is there any ship here I can use?"

"No...what...is...going...ON?" snapped Chloe.

"I have to find one of the lost stones," snapped Fenris, "Some foolish human has activated it and I must find it before moonrise."

"What atone?" asked Chloe.

"A red gemstone, like a ruby, like the ones you've already seen," said Fenris impatiently.

Chloe paused at that before saying carefully. "It wouldn't happen to be set into some kind of amulet...would it?"

"They typically are. Some are made into necklaces or rings," said Fenris before pausing and asking, "Have you seen such an amulet recently?"

"You could say that...excuse me, I have to call the help," said Chloe with a weak smile.

...

At that moment, Draco wasn't on Berk. He was on Coconut Cake Island chasing a particularly hard-to-get slice of coconut cake. After a minute, his vision returned to normal, in time for his com to make his head explode...at least to him. "DRACO...PICK UP OR DIE!" screamed Chloe's voice in his head. Draco yelped and fell off the chair he forgotten he was sitting on.

"Draco, you'd better be in disguise again. We have a VERY important little job for you," snapped Chloe, sounding annoyed.

"Can't it wait until after my head stops ringing?" groaned Draco.

"NO! Your mission is to steal Astrid's amulet...BEFORE sundown. Think you can manage that?" said Chloe icily.

"Isn't that NegaMorph's expertise?" asked Draco.

"He's not there. SO GET ON WITH IT!" yelled Chloe, adding "And I'll be arriving in a few hours. Have the amulet waiting...or I destroy your coconut cake stash."

That threat cut through the buzz like a knife. "Right away," said Draco promptly.

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"So...explain why wolf boy is being trusted instead of blasted?" said Matt, annoyed.

"Because 'wolf boy' has been dealing with these stones since before you were hatched," said Fenris annoyed.

"Would you be kind enough to say what the stones do? And please...no 'it is beyond the knowledge of mortals' or I'll toss you overboard." said Matt, annoyed.

Fenris sighed and said, "Well, I suppose this story should start with me. I was a particularly strong warrior in my first life."

"Did you have the fur to start?" said Matt, wincing as Chloe slapped him.

"I lived as best a warrior could in my village until Hel's minions came, this being in the early days of the world," continued Fenris, glaring at Matt.

"Refresh my memory, who is Hel?" asked Matt.

"She is the queen of the dead, specifically those that died inglorious deaths," said Fenris.

"Undead? UNDEAD?" said Matt, twitching insanely.

"What did I say?" said Fenris, surprised.

"Oh, Matt has a little fixation with you-know-what," said Chloe.

"Oh, he's insane...anyway. I lost my life that day, defending my home. The gods, in their wisdom..." continued Fenris before Chloe finished "...they gave you a job."

"Yes, you could say that," said Fenris, "And this form I wear is part of it. I aided the gods in their war against the minions of Hel...but eventually I began to feel...alone."

"Yeah, we know how that feels," said Chloe solemnly.

"Odin granted my request, giving me some of the stones we are seeking now. They allowed my abilities to be passed on to those I saw as honorable and worthy. I couldn't have seen what would happen," said Fenris gloomily

"Let me guess, no one else can handle the savagery of the wolf," said Matt.

"Some could...but they were far outnumbered. I was eventually charged by Odin to reclaim the jewels and guard them far away," said Fenris.

"Well, you clearly missed one," said Matt, a small mistake at that.

Fenris snarled and grabbed Matt by the throat. "Do you think this job has been easy?" he growled, "I've had to slay men who had families; I've had to watch their bodies change back into the men they used to

be. Do think it gets easier to deal with after every death?"

Matt glared, "Wrong...it never does."

"Exactly. I only hope we'll be able to get there in time before I have to execute another innocent," said Fenris.

"Wait...so basically this damn stones an insta-werewolf?!" said Chris, sounding offended, adding "I had to get bitten."

Fenris glared, "We are NOT werewolves."

"So I'm guessing silver doesn't work on you guys," said Matt, "Anything else we ought to know?"

"The nullspace humans aided me the last time I awoke. They had weapons that could disable me...and Hel's minions," said Fenris.

"This?" said Matt, holding up a silverbane rifle.

Fenris moved the barrel away from him and said, "Yes, be careful with that. That's not a weapon to be used casually."

"Used one before...mine's a cannon," said Matt, with a smirk before changing to a frown, "Check in with Draco. He shoulda called by now. Tell me he has backup. I may not know Vikings but I have a good idea how she will react if she catches him."

Chloe clicked on her comm and said, "Draco, do you have that amulet yet?" However, all she heard at first was harmonica music.

Chloe stared for a second before facepalming and saying "She caught you, didn't she?"

"How would you like if someone tried to steal your shiny new gift on your birthday?" pointed out Draco.

"Did you get...the toothache?" called Matt down the comm, getting funny looks from Chloe and Fenris.

"Well, my teeth felt on edge, but not really anything else," said Draco.

"Ok, we'll be there in a couple of hours...put Astrid or Hiccup on," said Chloe in a cold voice.

"Hmm, gonna be a little hard with me being in a cage and all," said Draco.

"Are you a 600 series combat experiment or not? MAKE YOUR OWN DOOR!" yelled Chloe, putting some dragon roar behind it.

"Ok, but somebody's gonna have to figure out a good excuse," said Draco before the sound of bending metal was heard.

"JUST DO IT! PUT SOMEONE ON WITH AN IQ!" roared Chloe, her eyes crackling as everyone except Fenris who was looking impressed scrambled for cover.

A minute later, NegaMorph's voice was heard saying, "Hello, you've reached the number of 'I'm not allowed to go a birthday party because I'm a kleptomaniac'. Please leave a message after dunking your head."

"NegaMorph, if you don't pick up in the next 10 seconds, I will OBLITERATE YOU WHEN I FIND YOU!" screamed Chloe.

A second later, NegaMorph's voice was heard saying, "Chloe, I could feel your anger over the ocean. Matt driving you nuts again?"

"No, Hiccup brought Astrid a curs...unusual magi artifact and we need it away from her before nightfall. Can you manage that?" asked Chloe.

"Depends, this one of those artifacts that zaps you if anyone else tries to take it?" asked NegaMorph.

Chloe turned to Fenris who said "Are you kidding me? What idiot puts a hex like that on?"

"Might take me a bit to get there, but I should have it off and ready before anyone says 'Hey, your fancy thingy's gone'," said NegaMorph.

"Ok, just don't get caught...and fix the bars that Draco broke before anyone sees," said Chloe.

...

A little later, Draco and NegaMorph were scoping out the quarry, which meant they were spying on Astrid as she was talking with Hiccup.

"He just tried to rip it off...said Chloe told him too," said Astrid, sounding furious.

"Why would Chloe tell Draco to do that?" asked Hiccup. "Probably for a stupid joke. Or she's jealous that my amulet's better than her bracelet," said Astrid.

"I don't think she's jealous..." said Hiccup slowly.

"Of course she is. It's obvious that she thinks she should have gotten the amulet instead of the bracelet. What, does she think her boyfriend's better than mine?" snapped Astrid.

NegaMorph and Draco exchanged a glance that said 'aha'. Even from their hiding places, they could sense the slowly rising magi energy coming from something on Astrid's person. "Can't we just ask for that amulet instead of snatching it?" asked Draco.

"One, she definitely won't agree. Two, it would spoil the challenge," said NegaMorph.

"You first," said Draco calmly.

"With pleasure," said NegaMorph.

Hiccup meanwhile was trying to calm Astrid down. "Astrid, don't you

think this seems a little unlikely?" he said carefully.

"You bought it fair and square. She has no right to have someone else steal it from me," snapped Astrid.

"Maybe we should ask her why they need it?" tried Hiccup.

"No! It's mine!" snapped Astrid.

Hiccup jumped back at that. "Astrid? I think something may be wrong," he said carefully.

"What would you know?" snapped Astrid.

"Astrid...really," said Hiccup carefully.

Astrid took in a deep breath before saying, "Ok, I might be a bit quicker to anger, but I don't think it's that much to-" Suddenly, several black tentacles lashed out and tied up her arms.

"QUICK! QUICK! GET IT!" yelled NegaMorph voice as Draco swooped down, trying to pull the amulet off.

However, Astrid was much stronger than she looked as she was able to pull NegaMorph down with the tentacles he had on her.

"Ok...this is not...oh blitnaaaak!" NegaMorph yelped as he was pulled forward and smashed into Draco.

"Ok, that could have gone better, but we can get her on the backswing if we hurry and-" started NegaMorph before he found himself being picked up by the back of his coat.

"You...little...thief," growled Astrid, a literal growl at that that caused Stormfly to back up, not just the others.

"Uh, I don't suppose it would do any good to ask politely for that amulet now, right?" asked NegaMorph.

Astrid glared, unsheathing her axe, to Hiccup's and Draco's horror. "Hey...steady on...that's a little extreme," Draco began.

"There's a perfectly good reason we've been trying separate you from that amulet," said NegaMorph.

"Thieves." growled Astrid before chopping NegaMorph's head off.

Hiccup stuttered before falling over in a faint. "Oh right, he hasn't seen me regenerate before," said NegaMorph nonplussed.

Astrid looked confused before a blue blast hit her in the back. The group turned to see Matt, Chloe, Chris, and other troopers with their blasters out. "She's only stunned," said Chloe.

"Get that thing off her!" snapped Matt, pointing. Draco cracked his knuckles before trying to break the chain...optimal word...try. "Uh, Draco, was that 'physically strongest experiment' title just hype? BREAK THE STUPID CHAIN!" snapped Matt.

"I...can't," snapped Draco, a figure with a full body cloak walking forward and saying in a deep voice. "A locking hex...Hel's doing most likely."

NegaMorph reattached his head and said, "Hel, Hel, I think that means more than it sounds like. Wait a minute, isn't that local variant of the god of the underworld or something?"

"Tell me you can get it off. Otherwise we're gonna have some explaining to do," said Matt, concerned,

"Yes, it can be removed, but most often it will require the wearer's willing aid," said the cloaked figure.

"Great...and the chances of her cooperating are SO high," said Matt scathingly.

Then Chloe stepped in said, "Enough fooling around. The sun sets in a few minutes and the moon's probably out. I'm guessing moonlight's the trigger for this...spell."

"Indeed, but she needs to see it...and the stone will make her want to," said the figure as Hiccup came round.

"Wha...what's going on?" asked Hiccup.

"Long story short, we need to lock Astrid up," said Chloe.

"What? Why?" asked Hiccup.

"Your gift wasn't quite as harmless as it seemed," said NegaMorph.

"You gave the stone to her?" asked the figure, angrily

"But it was only an amulet, right?" asked Hiccup before looking horrified and asking, "What have I done?"

"Nothing...if we act fast. At worst she will need to endure one night," said the figure, calmly.

"Who are you?" asked Hiccup before stepping back as the figure, Fenris, lowered his hood and said "Someone who knows more than enough about these stones."

"Oh, you met a new werewolf," said Draco.

"I am NOT a werewolf!" snapped Fenris.

"That's like what I always say," said NegaMorph, "I have to keep telling people 'I'm not a demon', 'I'm not a demon', why can't they ever get that right?"

"Silence, demon!" snapped Fenris, Matt chuckling to himself at that.

"So I guess we better take her to the dragon academy and put her in one of the cages," said Draco, pointing to Astrid.

"How are we gonna explain that to the town?" said Matt.

"Oh, that's simple. I shall tell them what is going and assure them that I am taking care of the situation. They're sure to respect the wishes of a warrior of Asgard," said Fenris.

"NO!" shouted everyone before he could move.

"What?" said Fenris in shock.

"Usual reaction to wolf men is gunfire...trust us on this," said Techo, looking at Chris "No offence, mate."

"What?" asked Fenris in confusion.

"Look, they've just had to deal with a draugr invasion. Do you really think they'll actually stop to hear you explain how you and Astrid aren't actually werewolves before they start charging with their swords and axes?" asked Chloe.

Fenris looked around. "That explains the smell, at least. Fine, we will need another plan. Maybe her friend can redeem himself," he said, glaring at Hiccup.

"Erm...I wouldn't glare too hard at him. There's some special pets here, though they are still resting from nanite rampancy," suggested Matt.

"Is that supposed to matter here?" asked Fenris, "Unless they've managed to breed intelligent dogs, I doubt they would be of any aid." He then noticed that everyone was looking at the roof behind him. Fenris turned and spotted a black dragon perched on the roof. "A Night Fury! Everyone get back!" he growled before drawing out his sword.

"It's just Toothless...or Kala...I think," said Chris.

"I don't care what you called it. I won't have this one endangering this town of innocents," growled Fenris.

"If that's Kala, I'll chop you into small bits. If it's Toothless...I'll chop you into slightly larger small bits," said Matt casually.

Fenris gave Matt a confused look and said, "Are you saying that you're defending something that's about to set the town on fire?"

"They've not set anything on fire since the sneezing stopped," snapped Matt.

"Sneezing? Has the world gone mad since I've last gone into hibernation? That's a dragon, a creature that attacks villages and burns them to the ground," said Fenris.

"Nope...they gave that up a year ago, so I hear," said Matt, smirking.

Fenris looked completely bewildered at that. "We'll catch you up on recent history later," said Chloe, "Right now we've got to get Astrid to where she and everyone else will be safe."

...

Astrid slowly opened her eyes to see several hulking...things in armor. "Like em? Old marine armor...big and tough and nasty. Fenris said we should be careful when you woke up," said Matt's voice.

"What's going on here?" asked Astrid, "Where am I?"

"You're in the heavy duty cell in the academy. You're also wearing a very cursed little amulet that we can't get off even with a portable thermal cutter," said Matt, walking into view behind one of the hulks. "Hiccup convinced everyone to stay clear of the academy for a bit. Toothless is pretending to have a...relapse of the throwing up stage," he continued.

"Why is everyone after my amulet?" asked Astrid.

"Because unless you want a permanent fur coat, you'll take it off right now!" snapped Matt, punching the bar and yelping as his hand sparked.

"A fur coat? What are you talking about? What aren't you telling me?" demanded Astrid.

"Fenris, come say hi, here boy," called Matt.

A large cloaked figure walked forward, sending Matt flying with a smack as he came towards Astrid. "Pardon me," he said in a rather insincere manner.

"Bad dog," gibbered Matt from where he had landed before the figure said "Now then, I need you to take the amulet off."

"Who are you?" demanded Astrid, "Why should I be listening to you?"

"Because, I know perfectly well what those stones are," said the figure, Fenris, lowering his hood.

Astrid scrambled backwards out of shock. She's seen trolls, draugr, and several other things, but a wolf man was still scary.

"Yeah...I had a similar reaction," said Matt, as Fenris said "Unless you wish to share my powers...remove that amulet, girl."

Astrid's hands went to the amulet, but she didn't try taking it off yet. "But...it was a gift, from Hiccup," she said.

"I understand. I could always remove the stone. That is the centerpiece and the...power's source," said Fenris carefully.

"What power are you talking about? No one's been giving me a straight answer except 'take the amulet off'," said Astrid.

"The power of Fenris of course," said Fenris, pointedly ignoring Matt say "Ego much?"

"What are you talking abo-" started Astrid before Chloe stepped and

stepped upon the situation as delicately as a yak, "You're going to turn into a wolf when you see the moon, but it isn't technically considered a werewolf unless you take off that amulet."

Fenris glared at Chloe before nodding "Not a werewolf..." he snapped.

"Why didn't you just say so in the first place? The moon's not already out yet, is it?" asked Astrid.

"Not yet...simply remove the amulet," said Fenris, smiling as he realized that a problem would be sorted easily for once.

Astrid's hand reached up to the chain of the amulet. However, fate showed its cruel humor by allowing the clouds that had been obscuring the moon's rise to drift out of the way. The reaction was impressive, Astrid seeming to seize up, the amulet's jewel starting to glow brightly.

"Everyone stand back," ordered Fenris, pushing the others away from the bars.

Astrid was doubled up now, twitching as the amulet crackled with energy. "OPEN THE BARS!" yelled Matt angrily, before swearing and sending a plasma burst into the lock with his hand.

"Don't let her out, you fool!" snapped Fenris, "She'll have no control over herself!"

Matt ignored that, throwing the gate open and running inside. "Astrid, get a grip, focus on what I'm saying...GRK!" he said, gasping as Astrid grabbed his throat.

He soon found himself being thrown right back out. "You see how foolish it is try and talk with a changing she-wolf?" said Fenris pointedly.

"HOLD HER DOWN!" yelled Matt, before Astrid screamed, the amulet blazing with light as it got enough lunar energy to power up. Astrid's gem glowed a bright red light which spread out from the silver clasp in the form of rings. The rings swept over her limbs and body, changing into lupine form as they passed, her clothes being replaced by a short teal armor. When the glow faded, Astrid was replaced by a humanoid wolf that barely had any resemblance at all to her. "Well, that's flashier than the werewolf transformations I've seen," said Matt.

"Grab her!" yelled one of the marines.

However, Astrid-wolf had other ideas and quickly charged out, sending everyone in her path flying aside.

"AFTER THAT...wolfâ€¦thing...I hate my life," moaned Matt.

Matt was the first up unsteadily, Fenris grabbing his arm to steady him. "Quickly...we must find her fast."

Matt sighed "Before she eats someone and gains a taste for human flesh?" before whimpering when Fenris said "No...before someone else makes her."

...

In a darker part of the forest, the shadows have become even darker despite the moon shining. Eventually the shadows ebbed, revealing more than had concealed when they first fell.

The group was mostly of orcs, green skinned musclebound idiots to a man...and heavily armed to boot. Their leader though was a dark, almost purple/blue skinned elf, wearing black carapace armor and a serrated sword.

The elf took a long breath through his nose and said, "Midgard, it has been too long since I've felt its air. If only the stench of mortals didn't foul it so."

"Oy, I had a bath two weeks ago!" snapped one of the orcs.

"NOT you, you moronic orc," moaned the elf.

"No need for name callin' Malaki," moaned the orc gloomily.

Malaki sighed and said, "Let us return to the task at hand. A wolfstone is active on this island." He paused and tilted one of his ears. "And there is something else, something I haven't sensed in a long time."

"What dat den boss?" asked one of the orcs before Malaki shook his head "It's probably my imagination. There is no way he could be here. Come...we have a recruit to find."

One of the orcs grinned and said, "Maybe we can find something tasty to eat along the way?"

"Urgh, yes, yes. We'll find you a meal," moaned Malaki.

The orc licked his lips with a black tongue and said, "I hope it's some tasty little kid. And I don't mean goat."

Malaki paused at that. "Hold...it seems we may not be here long. Spread out, just as we planned," he hissed, vanishing into the shadows.

"Showoff," grumbled an orc before the rest of them looked for hiding places.

...

Matt and the gang meanwhile were hot on Astrid's trail...and it WAS a trail, the transformed Viking having left a serious trail of damage. "Ok, we need to keep in contact...standard monster film rules. Don't wander off," called Matt.

"You know, we probably could have avoided this if you hadn't blasted the lock off," said Draco.

"I was gonna tear that thing off her neck," snapped Matt angrily, having already gotten the riot act from Hiccup and the kids.

"You'd have more likely tear her head off instead," said Fenris, "The

amulet's chain can only be unfastened by the wearer."

"Great...it's a chakra device," muttered Matt.

"And how are we to persuade Astrid to take it off now?" asked Draco.

"By catching and holding her until sunrise restores her human reasoning," said Fenris.

"We brought stun guns," said Matt darkly.

"She won't be so easily stunned this time," said Fenris.

"I'm good with dogs," said Matt absently before he stopped, something shooting into his head and sending chills up and down his spine.

Fenris sniffed the air and growled. "They're here..."

"Boys, load weapons for bear, big ones...that smell...what the hell is that?" said Matt, gagging a bit.

Chloe covered his nose and said, "It's worse than troll."

"It's orc. Astrid is in worse danger than I thought," said Fenris, running ahead.

...

Astrid had finally come to a halt at the old pool where Toothless had once been hidden. What human part had been holding on had led her there. Her throat felt great thirst and she walked over to the pool so she could drink. She paused to take a look at her reflection. Her appearance was that of a golden-haired she-wolf. Her fur color was really the only clue as to what her human self was because she didn't recognize herself.

Unfortunately, most of her mind was overloaded from the first time transformation, though part of her knew that it wasn't right. In the quiet of the lonely night, she could hear the whispering of her thoughts more clearly and they were starting to get louder.

There was also a horrendous stench on the air. She turned to sniff again before deciding to ignore it, leaning down to cup some water in her hands.

"My, my, it has been many years since a wolfstone has been worn. Even longer since a female has worn it. But there has been none that have been at quite as young as you," said a velvet voice. Astrid spun in a combat stance to see an ebony-skinned elf walking seemingly out of the air. "And with such finely-toned instincts too," the elf continued.

Astrid snarled and bared her fangs. "Stay your anger, child. Mine is not the hand you wish to bite," said the elf, "I am a friend you want to have." Astrid stopped snarling at that, if only from curiosity. "As I speak, a hunting party approaches."

Astrid's body tensed and the elf added, "I would not advise running

yet. You'd be more likely to run into them rather than away from them. But I know of how you'll be able to outmaneuver them. I'm sure I have something that can help you focus." The elf reached for a pouch on his belt before a deafening bang was heard and a rock exploded into gravel, one of Matt's marines dropping down into the pit with a crash, the others coming in.

"Hands where we can see them!" called Matt as Hiccup spotted Astrid.

For a moment, Hiccup wasn't able to see how this beast could be Astrid, but the color of her hair, the build of her body, and her eyes reminded him of her. "Astrid? It's me, Hiccup," he said carefully, Astrid looking confused before gripping her head in pain. "Astrid, don't hurt yourself," said Hiccup.

Matt put a hand on his shoulder and said, "Easy there. Let's see where this is pointed."

Chloe and Fenris however were giving the elf the evil eye. "Who might you be, pointy?" asked Chloe.

"That is Malaki, a dark elf of particularly bad reputation," growled Fenris.

"I am capable of introducing myself, Fenris," said Malaki, "I see you're still at this game. You've won more than your fair share of battles. Can't you let us have this one?"

"What's he talking about?" snapped Matt before he twitched and his mechanical hand shot up to snatch an arrow. To everyone's surprise he seemed annoyed, "HEY, WHO MESSED WITH MY REFLEX SETTINGS? Wait a second...AND WHO SHOT AT ME?"

"Drat, I'd thought I would have gotten that big head of his," said a voice in the shadows.

The group looked around as a dozen or so green skinned men walked out of the shadows, holding crude but nasty looking weapons, Astrid growling and pulling out two sleek blades that had appeared with her armor.

The marines aimed their guns and the battle looked like it was about to start when Draco suddenly cried out, "PU! Is that who's been making that stench? It's even worse when they're close."

"Oi...I don't smell!" complained one of the orcs before his fellow sniffed him and keeled over.

"Thank you for the distraction," said Malaki's voice, but when Chloe and Fenris turned around, he was gone.

"Hey...where'd that guy go?" snapped Matt, before the orcs charged at the group. The troopers fired, but the orcs apparently had very thick and tough skin. Matt and Chloe's weapons however proved a little more effective, though their ion blades were far from the usual super cutters. The real shining examples were Fenris's and Astrid's weapons.

Matt punched another orc down before dragging him up. "Who sent you?"

he growled, letting his teeth and eyes transform for added effect.

"Who d'ya think? It's not like Surt would care about some wolf pup," said the orc. Matt glared before plasma blasting the orc to vapor. The other orcs were also being cut down, either by being slashed open by Fenris and Astrid's blades, sliced apart by Chloe's, or just getting hit often enough by the troopers' guns.

Matt finished off the last orc before having to jump back to avoid a slash from a growling Astrid. "Hey...easy!" he snapped.

Astrid just snarled before she kept slashing at him. "She's overcome with battlerage," said Fenris, "She won't stop until there's no one left to fight."

Astrid lunged in again only for a plasma pulse to throw her backwards and making her drop her daggers. "That's enough," said Matt, his eyes glowing to show he meant business. Astrid jumped up only for another pulse to throw her back into the wall as Matt advanced, rippling into his hybrid form. "You...need to snap out of this or I will MAKE YOU!" Matt snarled.

Astrid growled but didn't attack Matt again. Though it's quite possible she's waiting for an opening. "I have cooked far worse things than you in their own blood. DON'T push me!" snarled Matt, his eyes glowing brightly and his scales seeming to get slightly darker.

"Matt, Matt, let me try," said Hiccup quickly. Matt glared before closing his eyes to take a few breaths, his scales returning to normal before he stepped aside

Hiccup walked forwards and said, "Astrid, it's me, Hiccup. You remember me, right?" Astrid growled angrily, keeping her eyes focused on Matt, as the larger threat. "Astrid, we're your friends, not your enemies. You don't need to attack us and I know you don't really want to," said Hiccup. Astrid just growled again before wincing, grabbing her head in pain again. "Head grabbing's supposed to be, right?" asked Hiccup to Fenris.

"Yes, keep going," said Fenris.

"Astrid, you have to wake up, please. You don't want to hurt us," Hiccup continued.

Hiccup looked horrified at that, more so when Fenris grabbed his arm to stop him running forward. "Words are needed, not action. She might tear you apart by accident in this stage," said Fenris. Astrid finally stopped whining before trying to push herself to her feet, groaning weakly. Hiccup tried to move forward by Fenris said, "Not yet."

"Urrrgh...my head," said Astrid weakly, her voice sounding like it had a small echo before she paused. "Wait, where am I?" she asked before looking at her furred and clawed hands, "What's happened to me?"

"I told you we needed that stone," called Matt, before Fenris pinched a pressure point on his neck and Matt fell over.

"What?" asked Astrid before rushing over and looking at her reflection in the pond. "I'm...I'm a monster," she said, her voice becoming choked with tears.

"No...you're not a minster," said Hiccup, "You're still you...just..." he continued before Draco suggested "Fluffier. Fluffy is good."

"The form can be removed now that you have your mind under control," said Fenris, "Though I must say you do make a particularly fine warrior, for a young girl that is."

"Smooth," said Chloe darkly as Astrid looked even more miserable before she peered closely and took a scan. "Is the stone supposed to be embedded in her chest?"

Fenris walked over and peered closely. Astrid pushed his head away and said, "Hey, that's more than close enough."

"Hmm...this is why children should not fight. It seems your...subconscious has already made the decision for you. This will make it harder," he said.

"My what?" asked Astrid.

"It means that somewhere in the back of your mind you want this power," said NegaMorph.

"It's a pain when that happens," said Matt weakly from the ground.

Just then, they heard the sound of one person clapping. They looked up to see Malaki sitting in a tree nearby. "Congratulations, Fenris, you've managed to slay a bunch of stupid orcs and talk a little girl out of her tantrum."

"Hel will not have her!" roared Fenris before Malaki said "Hold on a second." before he swung his sword in a sweeping motion.

An icy wind briefly blew and when it stopped, everyone found that they couldn't move. "Can't have any mortals intervening. Now then, Astrid, is it? Do you really think that your village will welcome you back? You won't be able to hide yourself forever," said Malakai calmly.

"I won't be a wolf forever," growled Astrid.

"And why would you want to stop? You have so much more strength and power than you'll ever gain as a human. A warrior of unquestionable valor and limitless glory. Isn't that what you aspire to?" asked Malaki.

Astrid paused at that, her eyes seeming to darken a bit as Malaki's words hit home. "No...do not listen to his lies. You will just be another pet to Hel," snapped Fenris before Malaki laughed...and exploded along with the tree he was on.

"You talk too much," groaned Matt, his hand glowing.

Astrid shook her head and said, "Thanks for that."

"Hey, I love blowing jerks up," said Matt.

"Sadly, he will not remain that way," said Fenris, "Malaki is in service to the Queen of the Dead and she can resurrect him as many times as she needs. He will return and rarely plays around twice."

"Yay, I've missed being able to blow up as many people as we want," said Matt happily, causing Fenris to shudder involuntarily at Matt's manic grin.

With Malaki gone, his spell quickly wore off. "So, is there anything else we have to deal with tonight?" asked Chris.

"We cannot leave Astrid here. Her powers are new...and she will have no idea how to control them." snapped Fenris.

"Why not ask HER?" snapped Matt.

"Yeah, for starters, I'd like to know how I'm supposed to be able to live in the village without scaring everybody," said Astrid.

"Yes, that's a great idea, before the angry mobs? Brelli0aaaagffrgj!" snapped Matt before twitching as Fenris nerve pinched him again.

"Can you teach me that?" asked Chloe.

...

Meanwhile, Snotlout and the others had been forced to cover for the gang and as to where Astrid was...given their idea of diplomacy, it was not going well.

"So, you're saying that Astrid and Hiccup decided to go mountain climbing to a moonlit walk and study dragons?" asked Stoick dubiously.

"Yeah...that's what I said," said Snotlout, sweating bullets

"So when can we expect them back?" asked Stoick.

"Erm...soon?" said Fishlegs, who looked like he was having a heart attack.

Luckily, on cue Hiccup and the gang walked out, Fenris back in his disguise and Matt's marines having gone to wait a transport back to base. "Sorry, dad. We lost track of time," Hiccup said.

Stoick turned around and said, "Hiccup? Why didn't you just tell me where you were going?"

"Er, we kinda wanted it to be private," said Astrid.

"We just happened to meet them on the way in," said Matt. Matt walked forward, his brain on overdrive before he muttered to Stoick, "Young love and all that, they've had a hard few weeks."

Stoick smiled and said, "Ah, I know how that is. I was like that with my wife when I was about their age."

Matt nodded. "That's a new member of my crew," he said, nodding in Fenris's direction.

Stoick raised an eyebrow. "Big fellow."

"That he is. We thought we'd need someone who knows the lay of the land. He...volunteered," said Matt.

Stoick shrugged and said, "It's not my business who you pick."

With that Stoick walked off, everyone breathing a sigh of relief before Chloe unclicked the holobracelet off of Astrid. "Now...lets work out how to give her the home grown human look your way, Fenris," she said.

"What about pointy ears?" said Matt.

Fenris nodded "Indeed...I will have to teach you how to use these abilities until you can release it."

"How long could that take?" asked Astrid.

"Given your natural competitiveness clinging to that wolf power, it could be quite a while," said NegaMorph.

Astrid glared before closing her eyes, the stone, which had pride of place on her armor glowed before she shifted back to human, the gem back as an amulet, though it was just tight enough to not cause discomfort but also requiring that the wearer's head would need to be removed to get it off.

"Great, it's that Vang Xian Necklace thing all over again," muttered Matt.

Astrid, to her credit, was trying to pull it off, getting angrier which seemed to be causing an interesting reaction. "Erm, Astrid, humans don't have amber eyes," said Chloe weakly.

"Like I said, her subconscious wants it and until she can convince herself she truly wants to let it go, it won't part from her," said Fenris.

"Crap...EXACTLY like the Vang Xian!" muttered Matt.

...

Malaki opened his eyes with a surprised yell. It wasn't every day you were blown into bits smaller than an ant. Typically when he woke up after being respawned, he had a sore spot where he had been mortally wounded. But this time his body hurt all over.

"It seems you underestimated Fenris's new companions." said a female voice. Malaki noticed with a chill that he wasn't on Midgard. The frosted chill of the wind quickly confirmed it. A quick look around confirmed that his surroundings were not of ice and snow like in Jotunheim, but a dark grey marble-like stone. He slowly turned to see Hel, on her throne with a smirk on her face. "It seems that finding

Fenris's new protégé was not a 'simple matter'," Hel chuckled.

"I was caught by surprise," protested Malaki, "His companions had strange weapons."

"Isn't that what you said the last time?" asked Hel amusedly.

"Those ones were annihilated to their last man. I saw to it myself," snapped Malaki before a 'mask' of ice covered his mouth.

"In which case you should have been prepared for these new ones," said Hel sharply. Malaki simply folded his arms sulkily, unable to speak a word with his mouth frozen as Hel continued. "Your brute force method has failed. Maybe it's time you tried what your race was famed for...subterfuge." Hel looked into a crystal ball that showed her the village of Berk. "There is much here that you can use to your advantage. One in fact that you could have used from the start if you had bothered to look for it."

"Her village works with dragons. They would see beyond appearances..." began Malaki as his ice mask was released before pausing as Hel raised a hand.

"Wait for it." she said calmly as the view homed in on a house on the edge of the village.

The image focused on an old man in a washtub with a sheep. Malaki winced and said, "Do I really need to see this?"

"Just listen." snapped Hel, casting her ice mask again.

Sound was filtered through the crystal, "Those dragons make everything harder every day. I wouldn't be surprised if they spoiled the water supply before too long. Inviting them in was the worst mistake made in Berk history. There ain't no room among decent Vikings for monsters like them. Oh Fungus, you're the only who has any common sense besides me. Would you like your tummy brushed?"

Even Hel paled at that. "Too much, too much," she said quickly muting it again before turning to Malaki. "That...is your way in," she said, adding "As much as it pains me to say."

"With that disgusting old man? I think I would prefer the company of orcs," said Malaki.

"It's either that or I send you back to oblivion and send someone more capable!" snapped Hel angrily.

Malaki winced and said, "I shall try. I just hope his hatred is malleable enough to be pointed in the right way. Mortals tend to be like streams, the older they get, the harder it is from them to change direction."

"He should be easy." said Hel before saying "Are you still here?" before she flicked him...and he was on Midgard with a much worse all over ache next to a stump that had once been a tree not a few hours before.

Malaki winced and said, "I could have had a normal warrior's death,

but no, I had to sell my soul to Hel."

...

Mildew had finally settled down for a night's sleep. There had been some kind of commotion in the village about Astrid and Stoick's brat disappearing but unfortunately they'd both turned up. "Rotten kids, Stoick should have raised his better," grumbled Mildew.

There was a knock at his door at that, causing Mildew to groan and try to ignore it. However, the knocking got more insistent and Mildew snapped, "Go away! Can't an old man get any sleep?!"

"It depends...do you wish to be warned of a threat to your village or not?" said a voice from the other side.

While that did get Mildew's attention, he did make a lot of grumbling as he got out of bed if only to show how late it was to be waking someone up. He opened the door to see a figure in some rather nasty looking armor standing in the doorway. "Took you long enough," the figure said.

"If you got something worth sayin', spit it out. I don't have all night," grumbled Mildew.

"How would you like evidence that can see the Night Fury's partner banished in due course?" said the figure, reaching up to remove his armor helmet.

"I've been tryin' for months to do that," said Mildew, "Ye have to be as sneaky as a dark elf to get people to convince those villagers."

The figure removed his helmet to reveal his white hair, dark skin, and pointed ears. "Well, I guess I'm already a step ahead," he said.

...

Matt, Chloe and Fenris had decided to stay in the village, just in case say, they had to stop an angry mob from frying a wolf girl. Luckily that problem hadn't emerged...though they did awake to Mildew on a brand new rant.

"What's that old codger complaining about this time?" yawned Matt, considering that arguments in the morning should only be about breakfast.

However, Chloe was more awake and also a bit paler. "Werewolves," she said quietly.

"Oh for heaven's sake. Fenris said he isn't a werewolf and he should know, being one," snapped Matt, leaving Chloe with a case of severe mental whiplash, it being far too early in the morning for 'Matt logic'.

However, Mildew has been able to draw in a considerable crowd with his ranting. "I heard it last night and I'd be surprised if no one else did. Wolves howling in the forest. And we all know there are no wolves on this island. It can only mean werewolves."

Matt rolled his eyes before moving in, Chloe looking worried.
"Hey...grouchy man. Decided to try random accusations instead of blaming dragons? Your psychosis is improving," he called.

"Well, if it isn't our most frequent visitor," said Mildew in a false-friendly tone, "You know, Berk doesn't normally so many visits from the same group of people each month."

"I like it here. My doctor says the climate does my skin the world of good," said Matt, remembering to not say scales.

"I can help but wonder what you've bringing here with all your frequent visits," said Mildew, "I mean, plague rats can easily slip on and off ships. Or maybe something worse."

"Yeah...case 6 foot high man wolves are so easy to miss on a three day round trip," said Matt, inwardly enjoying running rings around Mildew's accusations, it didn't happen often.

"Oh? Then how would explain all this shed wolf fur I've found in the forest," said Mildew, holding a handful of grey fur.

Matt wandered up at that before taking a tuft. "This is from my coat. Look, you can see where it got torn out," he said cheerfully showing where clumps were missing before whispering "Anything else, fossil?"

"This piece of bark that's been scratched by werewolf claws," said Mildew, holding up a piece of bark.

"No, it's been scratched by a knife. Look, you can see, far too smooth," said Matt, cheerfully, grinning evilly at Mildew who was already losing his audience.

"Wait, I have something else, this werewolf fang I found," called Mildew, holding up a sharp tooth.

"I was wonderin where that went," said Gobber cheerfully, "Pulled it out of Stormfly last week."

With that, everyone lost all interest in Mildew and wandered off, many of them complaining about the 'crazy old man'. Matt grinned at Mildew, waving cheekily before walking off laughing.

...

"What did you expect to happen with such obviously faked 'evidence'?" said Malaki, annoyed.

"They had to think that there really are werewolves near here," said Mildew, "You'd think they'd have believe if I just shouted "Astrid Hofferson is a werewolf'?"

"You usually need ACTUAL evidence first," snapped Malaki.

"Well I ain't got anything to work with except what you've told me," said Mildew.

"Then be patient. I may have an inside man. After tonight you will

have all the evidence you need," said Malaki with a smirk.

...

Astrid had quite a few things to learn about her powers while she still had them. However, she was being told the worst about them in about the most tedious way possible.

She jumped as a fist slammed down into the table and cracking it in half, the two having the great hall to themselves. "FOCUS! What you don't know about your abilities could damn your very soul!" snapped Fenris.

"Then how about actually teaching me instead of saying 'your power is dangerous if not controlled' in about 5 different ways?" said Astrid.

"Very well, for example, you are now quite capable of easily twisting a man's head from his shoulders," said Fenris nastily.

Astrid winced and said, "I guess I'll have to learn my own strength."

"You will. You must also...be careful what you eat. You walk a fine line between light and dark now. One mistake...and you will be lost. Hel knows about you now. The less you use your powers, the harder it will be for you to be manipulated," said Fenris, "And what is also very important is to keep your emotions in check. Your inner beast can run wild if given enough leeway, which is rather easy when you're angry." Astrid sighed, remembering how she had acted when the gem had been kicking in before Fenris smiled suddenly, "It does, however, have its plusses, such as a rush at night."

...

Later that night, Matt was walking around the village. The gang was going to stay in town for a few days until they were certain that Astrid could handle herself.

"This is stupid. Astrid's got will like a concrete block," muttered Matt, walking along before he stopped, sensing something. His nose has been a bit more sensitive since he's met his 'distant kin' in El Dorado. This often worked to his disadvantage concerning bad smells.

He turned to see a familiar shape at the far end of the street in the shadows. "Astrid? Are you nutty? I thought Fenris was taking you out to get the wolfiness out your sys...Astrid?" said Matt as the wolf figure snarled angrily. "Uh, am I interrupting you at a bad time?" asked Matt.

The wolf woman lunged forward, grabbing Matt and throwing him aside, before delivering a practiced palm strike to knock him senseless

...

When Matt woke up, the whole night had passed and it looked a tornado had passed to. There were several walls broken, roofs torn up, and

scattered bits of wood that looked like unfortunate furniture. The town was out and about and did not look happy...and like a bad smell, Mildew was back on his proverbial soapbox.

"The evidence is a lot harder to deny this time, isn't it?" crowed Mildew, "After all, it's not like our precious dragons could have done this, could they?" Matt glared, as Mildew continued, "That's right. For once, those damn dragons aren't responsible. Yes, and there's no telling who this werewolf might be. It could be anyone among us, it might even be one of our own children. Like Astrid Hofferson for example," said Mildew. This turned out to be a mistake as several Vikings spoke up angrily at that, forcing Mildew to say "Just an example."

"And how do you know for certain it was a werewolf that did this?" challenged Matt, "Might have been a troll for all you know."

"All the socks are accounted for, couldn't have been trolls," snapped Mildew.

"Well, you don't have much evidence that it was a werewolf precisely," said Matt.

"There be plenty if ye know where to look," snapped Mildew.

"I did see something that looked like a wolf last night," said one of the villagers.

"So did I, but it moved too fast for me to get a good look," said another.

"I thought I saw something with fur," said a third. Matt glared as it was his turn to be smirked at by Mildew.

Stoick however soon arrived to calm the people down. "We've dealt with worst threats before. If this thing, which may or may not be a werewolf, shows up again, we'll be ready to deal with it," he said.

Matt gulped at that before slipping away before turning on his comm, "Chris, get Fenris and Astrid to me, NOW!"

...

A little later, they were in a clearing in the forest getting their alibis straight.

"Ok, are you sure you didn't lose Astrid at any point in time? I shoulda never agreed to a midnight stroll," snapped Matt, pacing back and forth.

"I am certain, we were on the other side of the island in fact," said Fenris, "She couldn't have slipped back to the village without my knowing."

"Or maybe there's something someone's not telling us," said NegaMorph before grabbing Chris by his shirt front and demanding, "Where were you last night?"

"I was in a food coma from dinner," said Chris, groaning.

"And where you having for dinner?" demanded NegaMorph.

Chris burped weakly, causing NegaMorph to wince. "Mutton...lots of mutton and enough mead to make even a dragon drunk," he said

"Ok, but maybe it wasn't actually a wolf," said Astrid, "Maybe Hel sent one of her hounds here."

"No, there are people still alive in the village," said Fenris morbidly.

"So it couldn't have been a werewolf, er, wolf warrior she's already captured," said Matt.

"No, I killed them all," said Fenris.

"Well...maybe it was some sort of shadow imitation?" asked Matt.

"No, I can smell where it hit you. It was real. Can't you smell it too, my apprentice?" said Fenris.

"Would you please stop calling me that?" asked Astrid.

"It is true though. There is a small chance that you will never relinquish your new abilities, so I must teach you." said Fenris, jumping as Matt snapped "FOCUS!"

Astrid sighed before sniffing a bit and saying, "I can smell something, but it isn't my scent, right?"

"No, it appears that we may be dealing with another wolf warrior. Was anything else brought off this...Johann?" asked Fenris.

"Besides those silverbane rifles, no," said Matt before pausing and saying, "Wait a minute, it's the writing desk, isn't it? I knew it was bad."

Chris pointed skywards and yelled, "BURN THE DESK!" He and Matt charging back towards town while the others watched with embarrassment.

"I'm kinda wondering if we should save that desk," said NegaMorph ponderingly, "On one hand, it's probably an innocent piece of furniture. On the other hand...ah, what the heck. It'll be fun to smack those two around and make them look like idiots."

Chloe nodded aimlessly, stroking a new silver wolf bracer on her arm.

...

After a mighty battle to preserve the existence of a framed writing desk, it was decided that the group will look for the werewolf tonight.

"Ok, this can end three ways. One: we find the werewolf and blow its head off. Two: it turns out one of our resident ones is the monster and they eat us. Or 3...we look like idiots," said Matt, the group

sitting in the village square, a Viking opening his door and yelling "Just get eaten quietly, we're trying to sleep."

"We've already gotten a head start on the third part," said NegaMorph.

"SILENCE!" screamed Matt, manically before screaming as several Terrible Terrors decided to deal with him themselves and mobbed him.

...

"Hmm...maybe it was a dragon?" said Fenris, he and Astrid having long shifted form.

Stormfly and Toothless snorted angrily at that as Hiccup yawned and said, "I don't think so. They'd usually go for the food stores, not random houses."

"Well the signs point to little else," said Fenris, "I mean, a giant would have left a lot more damage and would have been more easily seen."

"I don't get it...Chloe, hey, where'd you get that?" asked Matt, noticing Chloe's new bracer.

"I brought it, OK?" snapped Chloe angrily.

"Where from? I would have remembered it," said Matt.

"Off...off Johann," snapped Chloe angrily.

Fenris sniffed the air and said, "I smell something. Apprentice, come with me."

"I'm not your apprentice," grumbled Astrid before they headed off, completely ignored by the two Lynches in their argument. Hiccup and Toothless also took off, sensing this wasn't someplace they'd want to be.

"Chloe, if you nicked this, it might be a sign of dragon greed. Have we forgotten what happened in South America to me?" snapped Matt.

"You're a plasma dragon, being a greedy egomaniac's in your blood!" snapped Chloe.

Matt glared at that. "Take that back!" he snapped.

"Make me!" snarled Chloe.

Matt snapped at that, pushing her back. "You even think about that? Draconus would love to rip you to ribbons," he snapped.

"At least Draconus has an idea of what he's doing most of the time," snapped Chloe.

Matt glared before he twigged, looking down at the bracer. "That...that's making you...give it!" he snapped, reaching for it.

"No, it's mine!" snapped Chloe.

"No...give...it...wow!" snapped Matt, jumping back as the bracer seemed to grow to become a proper glove, energy shooting up Chloe's arm as she twitched. "Ok, I think I've seen enough to know that is the second last piece of living armor I want my sister to wear. Now smegging come off!" yelled Matt as he grabbed at the gauntlet only to be thrown backwards. Chloe staggered back after that grabbing her head before, with a flash, a rather annoyed looking wolf woman was snarling, "Oh boy."

"She is a rather impressive specimen, isn't she?" said a familiar voice. Matt turned to see Malaki sitting on a nearby roof. "Yes, fully grown, fair, naturally ferocious. She would be an almost perfect replacement for the pup."

"Hi, bye!" snapped Matt, attempting to toss a plasma ball before his aim was thrown off by a tackle from Chloe.

"Yes, I'd be satisfied to take her and leave, but Hel wants Asgardian wolf warriors," said Malaki.

"She gets nothing!" snapped Matt, trying to push Chloe off.

"And what do you intend to do about it, plasma dragon? I know of your ilk, considering themselves gods and living off the misery of humans both literally and figuratively. Hardly what I'd call hero material," said Malaki.

"I'm not them! I'm not even related!" snapped Matt, before he butted Chloe and pushed her back, hopping back, "So...I'm guessing you provided the information to Mildew."

"Me? Do I look like the gossiping type to you?" asked Malaki before Chloe tackled Matt again. Matt span before he was grabbed in a headlock, Malaki hopping down. "You know what's better than one werewolf on the loose?" he asked.

"A vampire and a werewolf on the loose?" asked Matt dryly.

"No...two werewolves," said Malaki, pulling a bracer out.

...

"Be careful, dark elves are tricky and have their own devious spells," warned Fenris quietly.

"And I'm guessing Malaki is particularly devious even by dark elves standard," said Astrid.

"He is...he is a loyal minion of Hel. One of her most powerful enforcers. I thought him permanently dealt with," said Fenris darkly, the two silently heading along a path.

"I'm guessing your enmity's gotten rather personal over the centuries," said Astrid.

"He is a monster who would happily spread pain and destruction wherever he goes," said Fenris darkly.

"And he's hurt people who were close to you, didn't he?" asked Astrid.

"He was the leader who attacked my home. He killed me back when I was human," said Fenris angrily.

"I thought you said it was dragons," said Astrid.

"I never said dragons killed me," smirked Fenris before saying, "Here...he's over there." The two wolf warriors crouched down and waited until their quarry got close. Once the distance was short enough, they both leapt out with roars. Mildew promptly screamed and fainted.

Fenris had the decency to look embarrassed. "Well...this doesn't usually happen," he managed to say as Astrid fumed.

"Great...at least he can't hear...hear us," she said, shaking her head as a rather nasty smell came to.

Fenris picked up the scent and growled, "Someone is tracking us."

"The real werewolf?" Astrid whispered, looking around, only for Fenris to say "Stop trying to spot him, eyesight is no longer your only option."

Astrid sighed before her ears started twitching around, trying to pick up where the werewolf is. She got a shock from how easy it was to pick out individual sounds. Admittedly she'd already done this but the last time she hadn't exactly been herself. A snapping noise from the woods was quickly identified as several of the wild boars that inhabited the island...a rich smell indicated that Gobber was having a midnight snack again...and a scrabbling of rocks above them...

Astrid quickly looked up and jumped backward to avoid being under the werewolf as it leapt. Fenris had also jumped back...which proved good as the attacker quickly levelled an automatic silenced pulse pistol and fired a burst before jumping back up out of sight.

Fenris had barely avoided the shot and now he was in a defensive stance. "This is not a normal werewolf," he said.

"Really?" said Astrid sarcastically, looking around for the attacker before spotting a blur. "There!" she snapped, jumping up after him before she realized what she'd just managed.

However, the werewolf had heard her coming and was able to swing around with a backhand that sent Astrid tumbling back. Astrid shook the stars from her vision to see a black furred wolf warrior growling angrily, the blaster in its hand. However, the most interesting part was the metal left arm up to the elbow and the silver bracer on the other.

"Wait, it can't be..." said Astrid, though not wasting time to get back to her feet. The wolf man simply bared his fangs before aiming the blaster before Fenris descended from a high jump, a battleaxe slicing the barrel off. The werewolf looked at its broken gun with an

odd look of grief on its face.

Fenris had landed. "So...I didn't get all of Hel's pets," he snapped, readying his blade before Astrid called out "No, wait, I think that's Matt."

Fenris glared "Don't be...foolish?" he said looking to where the werewolf was on its knees apparently crying over its weapon.

"Er, if that really is Matt, he's gonna be even angrier with you in a little bit," said Astrid.

"What?" said Fenris surprised.

"Matt's friends told...stories. He likes his weapons more than most berserkers," warned Astrid as Matt, if it was Matt, stopped crying and fixed its gaze on Fenris, before lunging at him with an angry roar.

As Matt and Fenris went rolling and fighting, Astrid said to herself, "But it couldn't have been Matt all along. I mean, he was attacked last night so there has to be another werewolf." A clunk got her attention. "Of course," she muttered, turning to see a snow white wolf woman, holding a nasty blade, probably stolen from the armory. "And there we go," Astrid muttered, drawing her own blades and growling, "You've been getting me into a lot of trouble lately. Now it's payback time."

Her opponent actually grinned at that, spinning her blade in her hand and waiting for Astrid to make the first move. Astrid crouched before running low to the ground, intending on sweeping her off her feet. This didn't go as planned as her opponent simply flipped over her, delivering a double kick to her back as she landed before rolling back and making a 'come here' motion. Astrid growled before charging again, this time intending to make her shoulder connect with the she-wolf's stomach. Again, her opponent dodged, twirling to the side and making a growling chuckle

...

Meanwhile, Malaki was watching the brawl from a tall tree. "This is one of the best fights I've seen in a long time," he said, "Who said that Asgardian magic was better than dark elf magic?"

"I did, Malaki. I thought all the Silverclaw gauntlets were destroyed by the Allfather," said Hel's voice.

"Well, with only one eye, he's bound to miss spotting some things," said Malaki.

"Careful who you insult," warned Hel, "Either way, two gauntlets are not sufficient for my needs. I still need the Asgardians so stop spectating and do your job."

"Fine, fine, kill Fenris and bring the female, my pets," said Malaki calmly, knowing he didn't need them to physically hear for them to do his bidding.

...

Astrid staggered back as her opponent delivered a slash. "Ok...no more playing," she growled.

Astrid darted forward again. It seemed like she about to charge her opponent again, but as she was getting close, she fainted to the left and used her daggers to nick the werewolf's arm. The werewolf winced in pain and Astrid used this moment to grab the sword out of her loosened hands and throw it away.

The wolf woman's response was to grab Astrid's wrist, forcing her arm out straight and delivering several knee's to the chest before twisting in such a way that Astrid was flipped. Astrid was temporarily immobilized as she tried to get some air back into her lungs.

However, her opponent paused, as if listening and giving Astrid the opening she needed to stab her in the leg with her own weapon. The wolf woman gave a howl of pain before running, much quicker than one would expect with an injured leg.

...

Fenris meanwhile was having his own trouble. His opponent, after it had gotten the rage out its system had settled back for a hit and run strategy. Frustratingly, the werewolf was proving to be more agile than Fenris and was able to get in several blows.

"Matt...if that is you, you are being controlled by dark magic..." tried Fenris as his opponent jumped out from the shadows, dealing a shallow cut to Fenris's back.

Fenris gritted his teeth before continuing. "I'm not sure how this curse was placed upon you, but you must fight it. Otherwise, you'll be enslaved for all eternity by Hel. Lynch, Lynch, listen to me," he called, putting his weapon down before seeing his opponent literally melt out the shadows. A shadowclaw warrior, it had to be that. "Answer me this..."

"Is it one of those last requests?" growled Matt-wolf.

"Yes, in a way. Tell me, do you want to be undead?" asked Fenris, mentally crossing his finger that this worked. Shadowclaws usually required 6 men to take down...alone he and Astrid would have no hope.

Matt-wolf's eye twitched a bit and asked, "Why do you bring that up?"

"Hel is the mistress of death...and she will need a way to bring you back once you are killed," said Fenris calmly.

Matt-wolf's twitch got more noticeable. "Mistress of death...that includes un-death, right?" he said.

"Indeed," said Fenris, surprised it was this easy before stepping back as Matt seemed to start holding a conversation with two other people.

"Nobody mentioned undead WE MUST OBEY OUR MASTER fuck that, I thought we never followed orders TRAITOR!" he gibbered before punching

himself. "Oh...starting something, eh? IT'S TWO AGAINST ONE...GAK!" he snapped to himself before starting to choke himself with the other hand.

Fenris simply found a rock to sit on and settled down to watch. This has to be the most fascinating attempt at resisting mind control he's ever seen.

"YOU WILL NEVER DEFEIIIIIIII!" snapped Matt before Fenris winced as Matt 'Megan punched' himself and began bashing his head on the ground

"Hmm, I should step in and stop this, but I'm not certain how," said Fenris. With that, he strode over to where Matt was in the fetal position, giggling aimlessly before grabbing his unresisting bracer arm. "Hmm..." Fenris mused before tearing the gauntlet off.

Matt let out a howl of pain at that, namely because a good deal of fur had come off with the gauntlet. After a second though, his shape seemed to melt off, leaving a dazed human behind. "Where am I?" he moaned.

"You're still on Berk and have not been transported Niflheim," said Fenris.

"Is that good?" dazed Matt before stopping as a memory came to light. "Could you come closer please?" he asked nicely.

Fenris walked forward and asked, "What is it?"

Matt glared before issuing an eye watering punch before saying "THAT'S FOR KILLING GEORGE!"

While Fenris was recuperating, Astrid walked over and asked, "So who was that other werewolf?"

"That...that was my sister," said Matt, with a worrying level of calm.

"Chloe, but how?" asked Astrid.

"She was wearing some kind of bracer. I remember that pointy eared asshole...the one I killed. I'm gonna kill him again!" snapped Matt.

"Where'd she get that bracer?" asked Astrid.

"She said she bought it from Johan," said Matt. "Odd, the only thing I saw she got from Johan was that bracelet that Chris bought for her," said Astrid.

Matt's left eye, and indeed his whole left side went into spasm at that before he stopped. "Yes? You don't say," he hissed.

"I can't believe I thought she'd be jealous of my amulet because all she got was a bracelet," said Astrid, "Of course, seeing what they did, I suppose she has a bit of a right to be jealous."

"So...where is my sister? I don't see her around," said Matt, twitching with barely concealed annoyance.

"She ran off after I stabbed her in the leg," said Astrid, "She moved pretty well considering."

"You stabbed her in the WHAT?!" snapped Matt, the verbal equivalent of a shortening fuse.

"Astrid...I think you should stop talking for a while," wheezed Fenris.

"Ok...where...is that pointy eared...ASSHOLE?" snapped Matt.

...

Malaki glared at Chloe. "How did you fail?" he said calmly.

"She stabbed me in the leg," said Chloe through gritted teeth.

"And that was a problem why? It would have healed in seconds," said Malaki annoyed.

"Well, neither has this," said Chloe, pointing at the scratches she got on her arm.

"Look..." began Malaki before he winced as Hel said "Her cover is already blown, induct her. She'll make a good start."

"I don't, it seems like a waste of..." started Malaki before Hel made him stagger for a second.

"My will is the sole reason for your existence, don't ignore my commands," said Hell sharply.

"Fine, I will only have enough left for one more chance though, unless I find a victim to...resupply with," said Malaki warningly, pulling out what looked like jerky. Chloe sniffed curiously. There was something different about this jerky, definitely not beef or turkey. "Eat it...it's nobody you know." muttered Malaki, Chloe wincing before shakily reaching for it.

A voice in the back of her head was shouting her to not do it, saying it was against almost everything she stood for. Sadly, the control hex on the bracer was far too powerful as she reached for it...

...

"I...didn't...knowâ€|" gasped Chris, being held off his feet...by his throat by a hybrid form Matt who was growling like a chainsaw.

"Did you even think to run it by Draco for any magic?" snapped Matt.

"Of course I did," gasped Chris.

Draco gulped as Matt turned to look at him. "It...checked out," he whimpered.

"Obviously your senses aren't that sharp if you couldn't pick up a

curse like that!" snapped Matt.

"Of course he wouldn't have. Dark elf curses were always made to not be seen," said Fenris calmly.

"Wait, that's a dark elf curse?" asked Chris, "I thought that bracelet was crafted by elves for a princess."

"That didn't necessarily mean that light elves made it," said Fenris.

Matt glared at Chris at that. "Once this is over...there will be consequences," he said darkly before releasing Chris's throat.

Chris winced before saying, "Let me help. I owe Chloe at least that much."

"You've done enough," said Matt darkly.

"We must move swiftly," said Fenris, "Malaki will still be near and leaving Chloe in his power would be disastrous."

"How bad are we talking here?" asked Matt.

"Hel may want the Asgardian wolf power, but Malaki knows the potential of the dark elves' magic better than anyone. He'll craft more gauntlets based on Chloe's and find means to further entrench her under his control," said Fenris.

"And how bad would that be? She's already wolfy. What would more gauntlets do?" snapped Matt.

"Great, first it's draugr, then it's wolf people. What next? Vampires?" snapped Chris.

Fenris glared, "Don't be silly."

Chris shrugged. "Yeah...I suppose that was a little..." he began only for Fenris to say "...it's far too cold for them here."

Matt sighed before pausing and saying, "Wait, dragons, werewolves, vampires, you don't think Ghoulwyrms involved, do you?"

"Who's Ghoulwyrms?" asked Fenris.

...

At a dimension not too far away

"OH NOT AGAIN! WHO THE HELL KEEPS TALKING ABOUT ME?" snapped Ghoulwyrms, his ears on fire...literally.

...

"Ok...so how can we get my sister back before she is a card carrying member of team evil?" said Matt, angrily.

Fenris looked thoughtful and said, "For such occasions, I'd say a locating spell would be useful, but we haven't the time to craft one. So I suppose we'll have to track her scent."

"Sure...coming from the wolf man," snapped Matt.

"You'll need as many keen noses as you can get," said Chris, "I've got a particularly good nose, let me help."

"I told you that you'd done enough!" snapped Matt.

"Anyways, we already have a locating spell," said Draco, "Megan made one for her after that Red Death incident in case something like this happened again."

Matt stopped at that, his hybrid form becoming similar to a hybrid version of his...El Dorado episode. "And when were you going to tell me?" he said, twitching.

"After you were finished dressing down Chris," said Draco, "It got a little hard to get a word in edgewise."

Matt growled before grabbing Draco next, Fenris sighing. "I heard stories about the plasma dragons. They do have tempers," he said, Astrid nodding in agreement.

"I'll just go get that spell from Megan," said NegaMorph, "Try to snap Matt out of his dark mood while I'm gone." With that, he vanished into a shadow portal.

Fenris frowned and said, "Are you sure we can trust that creature? He is a monstrosity of dark magic if I've ever seen one."

"No, he's an unholy offspring of science gone nuts," said Matt.

"Even more reason to distrust him," said Fenris, "Science tends to act without thought of morality and whatever science produced him was definitely not intent on peaceful purposes."

"He's come over a new leaf...and Chloe's his best friend. He'd sooner jump in an active volcano than leave her to evil," said Matt.

"I'm not sure I can understand such a pairing, but is his friendship is true, I suppose I shouldn't worry about his betrayal," said Fenris.

"Oh, you'll be fine as long as you don't have any valuables on you," said Matt, walking off as Fenris petted his belt before petting it again with more urgency when he realized his money pouch was gone.

...

When Chloe is in peril, Matt didn't like to take chances. So he went to gather up the other kids and their dragons. Of course, that meant telling the ones who didn't know about Fenris, Astrid's amulet, and all the rest.

"So you're like...able to bite people's heads off now?" asked Ruffnut, Astrid facepalm...facepawing.

"Does my mouth look big enough for that?" growled Astrid.

There was a pause before Tuffnut said, "Wait, is this one of those trick questions?"

"Ok, here's the plan. Astrid will be bait..." began Matt, raising a plasma field as Stormfly objected with a few spines "...and when pointy-eared bastard and my sister arrives, we jump on them and stomp him into a fine paste...which will then be blown up."

Fenris nodded slowly, "Ooookay...least you are being thorough."

"And how are we supposed to keep Astrid from tearing us apart?" asked Snotlout.

"I'm actually in control," said Astrid icily as Matt said "We jump Malaki BEFORE he grabs Astrid."

"But I doubt Chloe's going to have better self-control," said Snotlout.

"Nope, she pushed me through a wall," said Matt, before pausing, "Oh shit,"

"Let me guess, you have no idea how to handle her," said Ruffnut.

"I...can beat her," said Matt, wincing as NegaMorph buzzed.

"Uh huh, so how are we supposed to beat her?" asked Tuffnut.

"Overwhelming firepower usually worked," said Chris.

Matt turned and glared. "If I want your opinion, which I don't, I'll ask for it. And don't expect me to ask for it anytime soon," he snapped.

"LISTEN! We must be ready, if Malaki is as smart as usual, he'll be close by," snapped Fenris.

...

Malaki was watching the hunting party as they flew over and ran through the woods. "So anxious to find me, so anxious to save their friend," he mused, "Can I really keep them waiting too long?"

"No. I am guessing there is a reason you have several of my alchemists working on Silverclaw armor," said Hel's voice.

"You cannot deny that the Silverclaw is not a fair rival to the Asgardian's wolf warriors," said Malaki.

"If you choose the right hosts. Fine, but any failure will be on your head alone," said Hel angrily before breaking the connection just as several orcs emerged from a portal, holding a couple of boxes.

Malaki hopped down from his branch and walked over to one of the orcs. He opened the box he was holding to reveal about a dozen bracers. "Excellent," said Malaki, "This should be enough to equip to

every able-bodied human in the village."

"We'z can't get any more though. Dey said dey wuz out of quicksilver," said the orc, Malaki waving a hand dismissively "We have more than enough."

"Ya know dem villagers ain't gonna come quietly," said an orc.

"That's why we are going to grab our first recruits in a few minutes," said Malaki before the orc said "What ya gonna do? Youse got blown up last time...you'se gonna explode at em again?" he laughed, along with his squadmates as Malaki sighed "I already have one minion...Miss Lynch?"

A savage growl made all the orcs stop laughing instantly. They turned to see a female wolf warrior emerge from the forest darkness. Though her white fur was luxurious, she was hardly a comforting sight what with the bony spikes growing from her upper arms, shoulders, and back. Her tail's fur seemed matted at first glanced but then one could see it was actually covered with overlaying spines. Her twisted horns and red eyes completed the demonic look to the beast.

"Is there any more problems?" said Malaki, the orcs shaking their heads nervously. And to think, this is only a female with limited muscle mass," said Malaki, "Imagine what a male version of this would like."

"Rather not, boss. C'MON LADS! WE'S GOT SKEAKSY STUFF TO SET UP!" said the orc, pointing to ambush positions.

As the orcs hid, Malaki turned to the she-wolf and said, "I wouldn't be too surprised if they fail anyways. That's where you come in of course."

The she-wolf bowed. "Yes, master," she growled in a deep echoing voice before seeming to ripple, fading into invisibility.

"Damn, I'm good," said Malaki to himself.

...

"Fenris, you kinda avoided the question before we set out. What...is going to happen to my sister?" said Matt, the group walking down the path, with hiccup and company on their dragons overhead...minus Astrid.

"I told you, Malaki will assert greater control over her at the cost of her humanity," said Fenris.

Matt cocked his head before pushing Fenris up against a tree, Draconus taking control as he effortlessly backhanded Astrid as she charged. "Now then, I'm nowhere near as reasonable as Matt. So you damn well tell or I'll see how long it'll take to kill you dead," he hissed in Fenris's ear.

Fenris sighed and said, "There is one certain way for any creature to be forced into Hel's power and I suspect that Malaki is most likely to use it. It will be a simple ritual involving the consumption of human flesh."

Draconus paused at that. "Oh...wow...that's too much...even for me. NegaMorph...your fedora...NOW!"

NegaMorph sighed and tossed Draconus his fedora. "You know, I don't fabricate them just so other people can use them as barfbags," he said.

"Who said I was gonna throw up in it?" said Draconus, setting the hat on fire and tossing it into the sky. "Instant flare," said Draconus, letting control back just as NegaMorph lunged

"What was the point of the flare?" asked Astrid.

"You might have to wait for an answer," said Fenris.

"Hey...something's moving in the trees" called down Hiccup before a bola with skulls instead of rocks narrowly missed Toothless and hit Kala. Kala let out a roar of surprise which immediately caught Matt's attention and made him plasma-throw NegaMorph off.

"AMBUSH!" called Chris before another bola wrapped around him. Matt turned with a snarl, issuing a decapitating slash to a charging orc. Orcs, however, aren't known to give up a battle easily and several more came charging out.

Fenris snarled, drawing his weapon and calling "FOR ASGARD!" charging at them.

Matt was about to join in when a white pointy blur suddenly tackled him. He spun to the ground to see...well it looked like his currently wolfy sister. "Chloe? You look...spiky," he said, surprised, before rolling back as she attempted to stomp him. "Let me guess, you ate something shouldn't have," said Matt, though his tone was darker than should be humorous.

"Best thing that ever happened to me. I haven't felt this powerful in years." sneered Chloe, the two circling while she readied a hellfire fireball behind her back.

"I rather doubt that. I think dragon trumps werewolf in the power department," said Matt.

"Really?" sneered Chloe, before tossing the blast, sending Matt flying through the air into a tree that promptly splintered. "That was an easy kill," said Chloe before looking around for who she could kill next.

Eventually, her eyes fell on Chris who had wolfed out and tearing his way out of the bolos. She looked confused at that, her body sending mixed messages, the first being bloodlust...while the other was...another kind. She had to admit that Chris was pretty handsome for a werewolf. If she had a bit more control over herself, she'd ask Malaki if she could capture him for herself. But there was still alot of bloodlust in her. And the small memory that he gave her the bracelet in the first place made the anger take hold.

Chris finally broke his way out of the bolos and stood up before noticing Chloe running towards him. It seemed he might a few many

clubs to the head because Chloe looked a lot less demonic and angry to him. He started bounding towards her, his arms held out to meet her hug. Oddly enough, things seemed to be moving slower they ought to have. But then they resumed their normal speed when Chloe's arm hit Chris in the middle and cause him to flip over and land hard on his back. Everyone paused for a second for a 'male sympathy' wince before looking at one another and continuing their fight.

Chris shook his head to see Chloe growling over him, her demonic spikes being easier to focus on. "Uh, Chloe, let's talk this out. Maybe over a little dinner or..." What Chris was about to say would sadly remain a mystery however as Chloe grabbed him and threw him into a boulder.

"Ok, obviously there's some anger we need to work out first," said Chris as he got it out, "Let's just get it all out." The next blow caused him to spin in place, falling over. "Ok, I'm gonna have to start hitting back if you don't calm down," said Chris. The final blow however caused him to say "...after a nap." before he passed out.

"Looks like Chris is going to need help," said Hiccup. He urged Toothless down to Chloe. Kala had gotten the same idea and was flying at her as well.

Chloe and the orcs scattered as they landed, snarling before Malaki appeared, tossing a satchel of something that kicked up a white dust. Toothless and Kala both started coughing because of the stuff. Hiccup was also coughing but didn't seem to having it as badly as the dragons were.

Malaki just grinned standing in the way, holding up a hand for the orcs to back off. "Ok, pointy...freeze!" called a trooper, aiming at him with a disintegrator.

"You're in no position to give out threats. Or at least you won't be in three...two..." Suddenly, a plasma blast hit the trooper and sent him flying. Everyone turned to see the two Night Furies looking paler than before. Mainly because they had what appeared to be bone armor growing out of their bodies with plenty of spikes. They looked like some unholy crossbreed between a Night Fury and a Bonenapper.

"Toothless?" said Hiccup in shock before he was thrown off, two orcs grabbing him as Kala spat several bolts at Matt's men as they turned to shoot.

"Impressive, isn't it? This is what the first Night Furies originally looked like. But then their 'father' didn't like what Hel was doing and liberated them," said Malaki.

"Turn them back!" called Astrid, angrily as Snotlout, the twins, Fishlegs and their dragons landed.

Malaki laughed, which was rather light yet with a menace behind it, like the merry rattling of a chain. "And what makes you think you can force me to change them back?" he asked.

Hookfang growled before lunging only for Kala to dodge, sending a trio of blasts into his side. Barf spewed out his explosive gas, but

a blast from Toothless set it off before it could reach Malaki.

The elf turned to grin at Fishlegs "Is your pet going next?" he said

"Uh, I think I'll ask first. May we please have Chloe, Toothless, and Kala back?" asked Fishlegs.

"No," said Malaki, darkly, nodding to the Night Furies, the two of them taking off and revealing that Toothless's missing tail fin was now replaced with a bony replacement

"Ok, it was worth a shot," said Fishlegs before Meatlug shot a lavaball high up into the air.

Malaki sneered. "Really? Is that your best...oh no," he said, adding the last part gloomily as he worked out the lava ball's trajectory. Malaki leaped backwards and barely avoided the attack. "I've slain dragons in the wild, you think trained ones could do any better?" he asked.

As it was, Fishlegs just managed to get off Meatlug before Kala and Toothless blasted her, knocking her out.

"Uh, boss, we've still got that other werewolf to deal with and I think that other guy's starting to wake up," said an orc.

"Oh, that'll be easy to take care," said Malaki, a red ball of light appearing in his hand, "We'll kill two birds with one stone."

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Matt groaned weakly. "Urgh...I am grounding my sister for this...she left me in the rain too," he said weakly, wiping his face.

Then Matt noticed that the stuff he was wiping off was a bit too thick and sticky to be water. He looked up to see Chris's muzzle over him dripping saliva. "Chris? Stop drooling or I hurt you." said Matt, pushing Chris aside to get up.

"Wait a second, where's Jacob?" asked Matt with worry. He looked around before spotting his rifle and running over. He leaned over to get it, unknowingly dodging Chris as he leapt at him. Matt held the rifle close and said, "Don't worry Jacob, daddy's here. He won't let a mean werewolf hurt you like he hurt George."

"Urgh...what are you doing, Chris? Get up." snapped Matt, looking over to where Chris had ended up with his head stuck in a log, "Chris, you better not have your fat head stuck again. Remember what happened with the raccoon?"

Chris's reaction was to pull angrily before tearing the log apart and literally roaring angrily at Matt before 'Jacob' sent him into the bushes. "Some people just can't take criticism," said Matt in a bored tone. As Chris was crawling out, Matt said, "Now are we going to focus on the important stuff or do I have keep blasting until you can think straight?"

Chris's reaction was to roar again, albeit with a little less

enthusiasm before charging Matt again...with the same result. "I don't have all night to do this, Chris," said Matt. Chris got up, weaving a bit, making what was more like a hybrid between a whine and a growl though he was still heading towards Matt, admittedly by process of elimination.

Matt decided to go easy on Chris this time by simply bonking him on the head with 'Jacob' instead of blasting him. "K.O." said Matt cheerfully as Chris went over like a redwood before a red smoke flowed out, making a 'bleh' noise before floating off. "Hmm, that wasn't the Hate Plague again, was it?" asked Matt. Then he nudged Chris and asked, "You awake?"

"But mummy...the fridge was like that when I found it," gibbered Chris before yelping as Matt kicked him.

"Ok, seriously, enough fooling around. We have to save Chloe," said Matt.

"What happened?" moaned Chris before he was kicked again. "Come on, get that wolf conk working. We have an elf asshole to find and murderize," snapped Matt.

"Stop kicking me!" snapped Chris.

"Then get moving!" snapped Matt.

Just then, Matt's communicator buzzed and he answered it, "Hello?"

NegaMorph's voice on the other end said, "The greedy goose leaves many breadcrumbs."

"Pardon?" said Matt, looking at his comm.

"The firefly on the fox's tail shines for all to see," said NegaMorph's voice.

"What? Speak English!" snapped Matt.

"I've followed Malaki to his camp and I can tell you how to get there," said NegaMorph, sounding annoyed.

"You coulda just said that," said Matt grumpily.

"And let just anyone know?" asked NegaMorph.

Matt glared before pointing his finger at the phone...a 'plok' noise heard as NegaMorph's head exploded. "Yeah, real mature." said NegaMorph through his secondary mouth.

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Sometime later, Matt and Chris arrived at the oddly-shaped dead tree that NegaMorph had told them to meet him at.

"Does that tree look...ducky to you?" said Matt, the two having stared for a minute.

Chris tilted his head and said, "Actually, it kinda looks like a

bunny."

"No, it looks like fist!" snapped NegaMorph's voice before the 'tree' reached out and punched the two of them on the nose.

"Ouch...that was unnecessary. Look, where's this camp?" snapped Matt before a shadow portal opened below all three. "Oh not this-" started Matt before he, Chris, and NegaMorph were sucked through before being sent back out through a similar portal. "...again," finished Matt weakly. At first glance, it didn't seem that they had left, but then it became apparent that all the trees around them were ash trees and there was a layer of ash like snow on the forest floor.

"Ok...did you warp us into a volcano zone?" said Matt carefully before NegaMorph grabbed him and Chris and pushed them down as several orcs walked past. Fortunately, the thick smell of ash kept the orcs from smelling them and they passed on. After a bit, NegaMorph let them back up.

"Urgh...my mouth tastes like a fireplace," gagged Chris, coughing out some ash before Matt said "Why didn't you duck?"

"Because 'demons' like me don't stand out so much in Svartalfheim," said NegaMorph before frowning and asking, "Am I pronouncing that right?"

"Do we look like Vikings?" said Matt, annoyed.

NegaMorph shrugged and said, "All I know is that this place is where dark elves come from. There's at least one volcano here and it links directly to the fire world Muspell and it's always spewing ash out here."

"Ok, so we're in the land of pointy ears. WHERE IS THAT JERK?" snapped Matt.

"Wait a minute, you can't just go stomping around Svartalheim like that," said NegaMorph.

"Why not?" snapped Matt.

"Well, for starters, if we don't find a way to filter your air supply, you two aren't going to last very long."

Matt and Chris immediately looked at their wrist comps that were both flashing alarms regarding poisonous fumes. Matt quickly started gagging and grabbed NegaMorph's hat. "Hey, you already ruined one hat today!" snapped NegaMorph as he put it to his mouth.

Matt paused when he realized that the foul taste from the air vanished under the hat. "Hey...have you been hording gas masks again?" he said accusingly.

"No, I don't need to breathe, remember?" said NegaMorph.

"Then why is your hat a gas mask?" snapped Matt.

NegaMorph looked thoughtful before saying, "I've noticed that the air isn't really bad where the shadows are. That's probably why the dark elves have evolved to live in the darkness all the time."

"Less science, more ideas, how do we survive here?" snapped Chris, before he coughed.

"Well, if the gas doesn't go through the shadows..." started NegaMorph before waving and causing bandana-like wraps of darkness to appear over Matt and Chris's noses and mouths.

Matt tried to say something before noticing that it came out muffled, choosing instead to glare angrily. "What's that, Matt? You wish to thank me by giving me a big bonus in my paycheck? How thoughtful of you," said NegaMorph.

Matt glared before clicking his fingers and making NegaMorph pop. NegaMorph's temporary lack of cohesion caused the shadow masks to become thin which meant that Matt and Chris were coughing again before NegaMorph finished regenerating. "Ok, enough fooling around, let's move," said NegaMorph, "And keep a sharp eye. What life exists here has had to live with the harshest conditions and is typically not very friendly with offworlders."

"Neither are we," said Chris, though his coughing spoiled the tough guy image.

"What did you say, Chris? You say you owe me a big dinner for helping you with this? You are very generous," said NegaMorph.

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"Ok, I presume there's a better plan than us just walking up and asking nicely," said Matt, glaring

"I was kinda hoping between the three of us we'd be able to snap Chloe out of her mind whammy," said NegaMorph, "She'd definitely tip the scales."

"Yeah...you honestly saw that happening?" said Chris calmly.

"It couldn't be worse than Red Moon. She was part vampire and werewolf back then and she's just werewolf right now," said NegaMorph.

"Werewolves attack everything," said Chris calmly, adding, "I should know. I'm getting an overwhelming urge to attack you right now."

"What, because of your primitive instincts?" asked NegaMorph.

"Actually, it's just because you're wearing my nerves thin," said Chris.

"Look, kids, lets fall back to the basic plan: blowing up stuff we shouldn't," said Matt cheerfully.

"Ought to work, just need to keep Toothless and Kala occupied," said NegaMorph.

"Wait...what the hell's wrong with Kala?" said Matt, spinning on NegaMorph who backed up from the sheer anger suddenly coming off

Matt.

"Didn't you see? Malaki gave them some bone dust stuff that caused to become bone-covered demonic dragon things under his control," said NegaMorph.

Matt's eye twitched at that before NegaMorph mentally heard an audible snap and suddenly, worryingly, Matt was all business...and he was only ever all business when he was planning carnage. "Fine...I can be adult about this...where's his camp?" he said in a voice rigid with self-control.

"Uh, just to let you know, I don't think that dust he's using is long-term. He has them get another dusting every five minutes like clockwork," said NegaMorph.

"That makes it better?" said Matt in a chilling voice.

"Which means that if you kept them from getting more bone dust for five minutes at the most, they'll probably go back to normal," said NegaMorph.

"He can't dust them if everyone's dead," said Matt with worrying glee, "You guys ready to..." Matt turned around, only to see Chris cowering in NegaMorph's arms.

"Now look what you've done. You've scared the puppy," said NegaMorph.

"NegaMorph, lead the way," said Matt darkly

...

At Malaki's camp, he thought everything was going his way, what with the capture of not only the wolf warriors but two Night Furies and several 'volunteers' for the Silverclaw gauntlets. However, the middle one was a point of objection to Hel.

"You IMBECILE! There is a reason I never went after Night Furies living in Midgard!" snapped Hel, who for once had made a personal appearance, such was her UNRELENTING FURY!

"I...I thought you would be pleased," said Malaki.

"Once again, you 'thought' without considering the consequences!" snapped Hel, "Your capturing and transmuting the Night Furies broke a pact I made with the Thunderer! Do you have the slightest inkling of what that means?"

"You...have an advantage?" tried Malaki before being frozen solid.

"No," said Hel flatly before thawing Malaki once she was sure he'd gotten the point

"The Night Furies in Midgard are outside of my boundaries. I was not allowed to bring them back to Niflheim or place them under my control," said Hel, "And you, you oversized imp, broke my word."

Malaki gulped at that. "So...what can we do?" he asked.

Hel seemed thoughtful for a second before saying, "Overdose them, make it permanent, remove ANY trace that they were Midgardian...and if Thor finds out, you WILL take all the responsibility. Are we clear?" Malaki opened his mouth to say that it would take a while to make enough bone dust but decided that it was probably more survivable just to nod, Hel adding "I will return in a few hours. I need to distract Thor and his own."

With that, Hel disappeared in a flash of dark flame. "So, uh, what are we supposed to doing?" asked an orc.

"Grinding more bone dust, you imbecile!" snapped Malaki, "Now get to it or we'll be using your bones!"

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However, Malaki had forgotten one thing...if you capture a mercenary, you'd better wrap him in enough chains to look like a metal mummy otherwise he'll escape, usually stealing your valuables and blowing up your house on the way out.

For instance, Techo had been slowly sawing his way out with his metal arm and the edges of the rope were finally worn away. "Ok, that took a lot longer than I would have liked," said Techo, "When I get back, I'm adding some sort of blade attachment to my arm." He looked over to see Hiccup and the others looking downtrodden. "Look, we've seen it. We keep the dragons distracted for 5 minutes, they all go back to normal."

"But the other dragons have been getting that stuff," said Tuffnut.

"They're probably brainwashed too," said Ruffnut.

"So we distract them for 5 minutes too. It's not a coincidence that Toothless and Kala need dosing up every 5 minutes," said Techo.

"You think we can keep them occupied that long?" asked Fishlegs doubtfully.

"Probably..." said Techo, sounding unsure, "Well, if I know Matt, and I know him pretty well, he'll be coming in and blasting up the camp any time now," said Techo.

The others looked skeptical before Fenris, in his very own cell, said, "We are in another realm. One that, from your reaction when we arrived, your people know nothing about. How will he even find us?"

"Matt can be rather surprising at times," said Techo.

"Really?" said Astrid, causing Techo to pause before saying "We're doomed."

"Wait, wait, let's not despair yet," said Hiccup, "There's a chance will come and save us..."

Just then, an orc walked into the camp and said, "Hey boss, I found

this thing in the woods."

He held up Morph who said happily, "I was making ash angels."

"Ok, now we can despair," said Hiccup.

"No, Morph's always easily caught. NegaMorph's still out there," said Techo hopefully.

"Can I sing a song?" asked Morph.

"I'm not in the mood for long meaningless songs," said Malaki in an indifferent tone.

"It only has one note," said Morph. "One note?"

How can a song have one note?" asked Malaki.

"Like this," said Morph before morphing into Belle and screaming shrilly.

Malaki, the orcs and indeed everyone in the camp gripped their ears or dived for cover as fragile glass exploded like grenades. "What in the name of the darkness? Someone silence that...thing!" yelled Malaki in pain.

"What did he say?" yelled an orc.

"What are you saying?" yelled another orc.

"What about flute playing?" yelled a third orc.

Malaki rolled his eyes before punting Morph as hard as he could...and finding out to his dismay and pain that Jumba had built the experiments to be tough. Everyone was so overcome with pain that no one saw the black hand come out of the shadow and snatch the bone dust bags.

Morph finally stopped "And for my next number..." he began before Malaki blasted him with a magical bolt.

"NO MORE!" he yelled, partially out of anger but also because his ears were ringing.

One of the orcs rubbed his ears and said, "That was the worst singing I've ever heard."

"What? He's an amateur. My singing is far worse. I'll let whoever's left of you alive hear it later," said a voice from out of nowhere.

They paused as the voice was cut off. "Yeah, Graham, I admit, you are worse," said one orc, the orc he was addressing yelling "WOT?"

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"Let me go...they need to die!" snarled Matt, angrily, it taking both Chris and NegaMorph and Morph as Richter sitting on his chest to hold him down.

"Dammit...it's never been this bad," struggled Chris.

"Is this about Kala, Chloe, or his injured pride?" asked Morph.

"Because he'll probably kill our friends too. He's in total kill crazy mode. I'm getting a headache from the bloodlust," snapped NegaMorph.

"Oh, I know how to deal with that," said Morph before morphing into Swirly, his hypnotic eyes meeting Matt's gaze. Matt glared before he shifted to hybrid and snapped at Morph, causing the others to scream. Another head popped out and Morph said, "Matt, you need to brush your teeth more."

"Ok, we'd better let him loose. Hey Matt, we're gonna let you loose," said Chris, saying the last part deliberately causing Matt to instantly go back to 'all business' calm mode.

"Now remember, you're only supposed to attack the smelly green guys and the pointy-eared creep, nobody else," said NegaMorph, "That includes Toothless and Kala who might not have run out of time yet and Chloe because she's still... Oh what am I saying, you couldn't take down Chloe even if you were allowed to." A hand shot out, grabbing NegaMorph and squeezing, causing his head to inflate like an inflatable stress relief toy, even with the squeaking noise. "Never mind," he rasped

"Ok, letting you go now," said Chris before releasing his grip and running back a couple feet to get out of Matt's way.

Matt calmly got to his feet at that, shifting to full hybrid. "You'll have 20 minutes once the fighting starts. That's how long I should need to clean house," he said coldly before walking towards the gap to their little 'side' located just outside the camp.

"You think we've just made a terrible mistake?" asked Chris.

"Only if Chloe wasn't there," said NegaMorph.

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The two orcs on guard duty were bored...and partially deaf thanks to Morph's brief singing career. "Urgh...least dat noise stopped," said one of them in a bored voice before pausing, footsteps auditable in the ash cloud. "You hear that?" asked the orc.

"Hear what?" asked the other orc.

A shape was now visible in the smoke, as such not even the orcs were able to miss it. "OI...YOU DERE...'OLD IT!" called one of them angrily, drawing his sword.

"This anyone's only warning: leave now or become part of the floor covering," said the shape.

The orcs looked at each other before laughing. "Go get der boyz, dis should be fun. We's haven't had a wannabe adventurer for years," said the first orc, his fellow running off. "Alright...you'z gettin in

over me dead bo-" he began before a plasma bolt shot clean through him. The last thing he heard before his vision went black was the figure, its eyes glowing red said "Fine by me."

The rest of the orcs soon arrived, only to find their companion dead. "Hey, who did this?" demanded the second orc.

"I did," said a voice above them, before Matt landed in their midst, ion blade drawn.

...

Malaki was working on readying some fresh bone dust, the supplies having vanished during the 'singing attack' when he heard the screams from the front gate, many being cut off half way through. "Oh don't tell me it's another giant ashwinder attack," muttered Malaki, "That's all my day needs."

He walked out in time for a plasma bolt from below to hit one of the orc barracks, devastating it and its inhabitants. "GET OUT HERE, YOU POINTY EARED BASTARD!" yelled a figure before sending another plasma bolt out into another building.

Malaki sighed and said, "Well, not a giant ashwinder then. I suppose I shall have to deal with this myself."

The figure turned to face Malaki at that. "PEEKABOO! I SEE YOU!" he yelled, sending a double plasma bolt at Malaki.

However, elves were naturally gifted at avoiding obvious projectiles and dark elves even more so in the dark. As it was, Malaki was sure he was a little slightly cooked as he landed. "Ok...I guess the Thunderer brought fri...wait, I know that voice," he muttered, pausing before realizing that he knew the voice and saying the second half.

"Got nowhere left to run to this time," called Matt.

"Then I suppose it's time I stopped holding back," said Malaki before snapping his fingers. Matt cocked his head before turning as Chloe landed in a crouch. "Tear him apart, my dear," called Malaki.

Chloe snarled before charging at Matt. Matt simply cocked his head before grabbing her by the throat and lifting her up.

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Chris and NegaMorph were sneaking inside the camp from the other side. "You sure this is the best idea?" asked Chris.

"Relax, since when has Matt ever come close to really harming Chloe?" asked NegaMorph before pausing as they both spotted Matt with Chloe in a stranglehold.

"Then again...NegaMorph, anger's your department, calm him down or something," hissed Chris.

"Draining anger isn't that easy, especially when-"

"Now, NegaMorph!" snapped Chris.

"Alright, alright," said NegaMorph before concentrating.

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Malaki was already starting to look worried, watching as his newest and definitely toughest warrior was being easily choked to death before Matt seemed to stagger, dropping Chloe as if in shock. Sadly this gave Chloe the opening to deal a roundhouse kick. "Show him no mercy!" shouted Malaki, "Make the end of this battle final."

Chloe paused at that, Malaki glaring before mentally examining his control. There was something...strange about her. It almost seemed like she was related to the Thunderer but that was obviously impossible. However, something inside was starting to loosen the more malicious parts of the curse.

"Dammit..." he swore to himself before repeating the order, "KILL HIM NOW! Chloe staggered a bit as her brain tried to move in two directions at once. Something buried under the vicious savagery was starting to seep through the cracks.

Matt didn't wait though, saying "Sleep it off, sis," before he sent her flying with a backhand. Then he turned to Malaki and said, "It's just you and me, toymaker."

"Really? Toymaker?" sneered Malaki, calmly.

"If you respawn here again, I'll have thought of better insults to throw at you before I kill you again," said Matt.

Malaki laughed, fading from view as he did. "You were lucky last time," his voice said.

"Maybe my luck's still holding out," said Matt.

"I doubt it." said Malaki, before a blade cut shot across Matt's leg.

"Argh! Why do people keep trying to cut my legs?!" snapped Matt.

"It's always the best point," sneered Malaki before another cut shot across Matt's opposite arm.

Matt winced and said, "I though elves were supposed have a sense of honor about battle, like sneaking around in the shadows and taking bites like a rat."

"You're thinking of high elves," said Malaki's voice casually, a throwing knife narrowly missing Matt.

"In that case, I guess I'll have to bring my own light," said Matt before tossing a plasma orb into the air. Instead of simply exploding, it let off a bright flare of light that illuminated the entire area.

Malaki yelped involuntarily, covering his eyes in pain before receiving a punch to the face as Matt spun. "There you are," said Matt's voice before Malaki was punched again, "What's the matter,

eyes can't take a little nightlight?"

Malaki glared before grabbing Matt's fist and flipping him over. "I don't need to hide to kill you," he snapped.

"Really? You can actually win a fair fight?" asked Matt mockingly. Then Matt heard the familiar roar of a Night Fury getting ready to attack. He spun to see two blurs shooting at him. "WHOA!" he yelped, jumping side just in time.

Malaki smirked and said, "You see, it doesn't matter what you throw. All that matters is the final blow."

Matt glared before looking at Malaki. "You die first!" he snapped, tossing a plasma ball that a bone-armored Night-Fury blocked without any apparent injury.

"See? There's always a way to defend against your pitiful attempts," said Malaki. One of the Night Furies attacked Matt more directly this time, knocking him onto his back.

Matt was sent flying at that before unsteadily getting up and grabbing the tailfin of a second attack, only for it to come off with a slurping snap, like it had only been held on with glue. Matt looked down at the tailfin in his hands and said, "Er, I didn't do that..." before tossing the fin into the woods behind him.

With that, Matt brought both his feet up into the Night Fury's chest, winding the dragon as well as shattering more of its armor, which seemed to be getting brittle.

"Is it molting season already?" said Matt cockily before the other one hit him in the back. This one's armor proved to be still pretty tough as a swift blow just resulted in pain. "That's probably Kala," muttered Matt, "Is there anything about that which I can use to my advantage?" After a few seconds, Matt called out, "Hey Kala, Morph went through your stuff this morning!" This didn't seem to work as Kala simply began firing rapid fire blasts.

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Toothless groaned inwardly as the last of the bone corruption fell off, turning to dust before it even landed. _"Bleh, why does my mouth taste like I've eaten a sack of bone meal?"_ grumbled Toothless.

"That's because you have," said a sultry female voice behind him. Toothless jumped around to see a dark fire with a face in the middle of it. He glared before the face said "Yes, yes. Let's get it over with. Surprisingly enough, I only have interest in the wolf warrioress, not you. Malaki was a moron to quote a mortal term."

"I'm not letting you take them," growled Toothless.

"I'm only interested in one of them. Obviously, Malaki has forgotten some of the drawbacks of the silverbane armor," said the face.

"I don't care. You get none of them!" snapped Toothless, the face laughing cruelly.

"Who said you'd be even able to slow me down?" it said.

Toothless snarled before he started charging up a plasma blast. "Oh, don't waste your breath," said the face in an offhand comment, "Listen, while I would rather have Malaki win this fight, but he went behind my back and broken a promise of mine. So I have to let him lose. You however are going to go free your rider before the Thunderer arrives with his retinue."

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"Well, least someone's having fun," complained NegaMorph, tossing a orc aside as he and Chris worked their way towards the cellblock.

"I thought you enjoyed knocking mooks silly," said Chris as he hit an orc's head another time to make sure he was out.

"No...I wanna help blow crap up," moaned NegaMorph as another explosion from Matt's fight was heard.

"There may be something left for you to play with when we get back," said Chris.

"With his mood?" said NegaMorph calmly as another explosion was heard.

"Well, I doubt this is gonna be the first time," said Chris before bashing another orc guard. NegaMorph sighed, walking round the corner...for a rock to splat him against a wall. Chris peered around to see a few orcs were manning a catapult. "Ok, didn't expect that," said Chris.

NegaMorph just groaned weakly before another rock hit the one covering him. "Ow," he groaned.

Chris winced before muttering to himself, "Now, how can I get over there and take them out without getting flattened?" A whistling noise followed by a plasma bolt to the catapult rapidly solved that problem. "Ok, NegaMorph, the catapult's dealt with. Let's keep moving," said Chris.

"I'm a little flat," rasped NegaMorph's voice from behind the rock, Chris rolling his eyes as a Night Fury landed unsteadily before growling in annoyance as one final piece of bone armor, the left tail fin, fell off.

"Hey Toothless, Kala getting over her calcium saturation yet?" asked Chris. Toothless shook his head as an explosion was heard back from where Matt was before he snorted dismissively and trotted past Chris towards the cells. Chris followed and said loudly, "Ok, we've just paid so you're all getting out."

Techo had been fiddling with the lock and said, "Just a minute, I almost have it."

Chris glared, pushing a surprised Toothless aside before he tore the door off, a metallic shriek heard and Techo snapping "OI! I WAS ALMOST DONE!"

"Yeah, sure, leave the lockpicking to those who have had training," said Chris before pausing and pulling a piece of steel out of the keyhole. He noticed the joints in it and realized what it was. "Oops," he said.

"Yeah..." said Techo darkly, walking out before looking at his fellow prisoners, "I warned you it was fake."

"Let's get going," said Chris as he turned to move.

"Hey, give me back my finger before you pick your nose with it again," snapped Techo.

"That wasn't me," protested Chris, "I told you it was one of the experiments." Toothless however got in their way. "Toothless, we need to get back into the action we've been missing," said Chris as he tried to walk around him.

Toothless simply growled, Fenris tensing up. "She's here," he said icily.

"Who's here?" asked Hiccup.

"Hel..." said Fenris, drawing his blade, "Your dragon has the right idea...if he is indeed keeping us from her."

"Hel? As in the Queen of the Dead herself is here?" asked Snotlout with apprehension.

"Is there another?" said Fenris icily.

"This area isn't about to become a desolated patch of total lifelessness, is it?" asked Fishlegs

Chris and Techo looked out at the wilderness. "It'd probably improve things," said Techo calmly.

"Maybe, but I don't want to be part of that lifelessness," said Fishlegs.

"Ok, you try and get past the...wait, where are your dragons?" asked Chris.

"They're in the pen," said Tuffnut.

"Think those guys were making more bone powder for them," said Ruffnut, "Didn't get around to it though." Toothless turned his head and spat a blast at the pen at that, proving that his mood was pretty foul at that moment.

"But what about Matt and Kala?" asked Fishlegs, "And where's Chloe for that matter?"

A snarling caused everyone to look over to one of the wrecked buildings where Chloe was shaking the wreckage off.

"She doesn't have a time limit on her curse, does she?" asked Hiccup.

Fenris cracked his neck. "It hasn't been 8 hours, has it?" he asked,

sniffing around before pulling some kind of sickly weed from the ground.

"That's how long it takes for the curse to wear off?" asked Hiccup.

"Well, that seems to be the average time mortals take to fully digest and expel something," said Fenris.

Chloe seemed to have spotted them and was charging, only to be flipped easily by Fenris who shoved his hand in her mouth, to everyone's surprise. Chloe seemed startled for a few seconds before quickly starting to gag. She flipped over and got onto her hands and knees as her retching got deeper and louder. They could see Chloe's stomach lurch before she started emptying it onto the ground in front of her.

"Oh...nasty," called Techo, in horror before Chloe threw up again, something like half-digested jerky on the floor. She staggered up snarling before looking confused before her demonic features fell off.

"Chloe, are you ok?" asked Chris.

"I think...I ate..." groaned Chloe before looking even more disgusted and vomiting again.

"Well done, you got us an ally then you incapacitated her all at once," said Techo sarcastically to Fenris.

"She's just purging her system right now," said Fenris, "Though it might take a while."

A thundercrack got everyone's attention at that. Everyone looked up at the storm clouds in the sky. "That's a bad thing, right?" asked Hiccup.

Fenris smiled a bit and said, "Actually, it's not."

On cue, a beam of light shot down before with a crack of thunder a half dozen golden armored warriors appeared, led by an individual no Viking could fail to spot. "Oh bloody hell," moaned Techo.

The man was dressed in a relatively lighter armor, though there was no doubt that it could defend him from nasty blows. His red cape flapped in the breeze as he raised his short-handled hammer above his blond winged helmet-wearing head. Electricity crackled around the hammer's head.

"It's the bloody prince," muttered Techo, Chris nodding in agreement as Fenris walked forward, grinning. "Thor...you are a sight for sore eyes."

The blonde warrior turned to Fenris and said, "Fenris, it has been quite some time. You haven't bitten off any more hands since we've last met I hope."

"No, though more of my tokens have resurfaced I am afraid. I am presuming that is why you are here," said Fenris with a sigh.

"No, it is because I've heard that a minion of Hel has broken our pact regarding the Night Furies," said Thor, "I assume this same minion has also been trying to acquire the wolfstone."

"Indeed. He imprisoned us. If it wasn't for a group of null walkers..." said Fenris, pausing as he decided that he shouldn't voice the point that the problem probably wouldn't be occurring at this moment.

"Null walkers? From beyond the Nine Worlds again?" sighed Thor, "I thought we had agreed on the boundaries."

"We crashed, alright? We have a bad driver," snapped Techo.

Thor shot him a sharp look and said, "I suggest you speak more courteously to the Prince of Asgard, null walker."

"Computer says kiss my arse. Treaty says we're not allowed to be squashed," snapped Techo, continuing, "Since we've arrived here, everything Asgardian or nine worlds related has tried to eat us. I'VE HAD ENOUGH!"

"I'm not sure why they would," said Thor, "You look like you'd make a poor meal."

"Bloody blonde prince." muttered Techo as most of them nodded in agreement to Thor.

"Look...can we go rescue the villain from our boss?" said Chrs, only partially sarcastically.

...

Meanwhile, Matt and Malaki were still at each other. However, Malaki was losing his advantage mainly because Matt had let go of his temper quite some time ago and knocked out Kala.

"Stay still and die!" snapped Matt, sending a stream of plasma flame out to illuminate the area and hopefully also roast the elf.

"What creature with half a functioning brain would obey that command?" retorted Malaki as he threw more knives at Matt.

Matt roared angrily, sending a blast at several orcs who foolishly tried to charge him. Malaki however was trying to sneak away only to turn the corner to see several Asgardian troops and the Thunderer...oh and his prisoners and their dragons, one of the null walkers pointing and yelling "THERE'S THE POINTY EARED TOSSER...GET HIM!"

Malaki quickly turned and tried to run in another direction, only a small hail of spikes to come out of nowhere, one of them nicking off the tip of his ear. Malaki winced and pulled a spike out of his armor. As he looked at it, he saw it more resembled a fang than a spike.

What looked like a demon staggered out of the shadows. "I've...had a REALLY bad week. My best friend got turned into a demon wolf. I got hit with 50 tons of granite...then YOU happened," it said unsteadily.

"Out of my way, creature!" snapped Malaki.

"Never!" snapped the demon before it fell over and began snoring. Malaki paused from confusion before carefully stepping over it and trying to run again

That's when a bundle of fur and fury slammed into him and knocked him to the ground. He was dazed but luckily got his brains back in time to avoid an angry battleaxe to the face from Astrid. "You're proving yourself almost to be more trouble than you're worth, child," said Malaki.

Astrid's response was an eye-watering kick that caused Malaki to squeal but luckily manage to limp away...this time into Hel. "My, my, my, you are in trouble," she said, her translucent image proving she wasn't really there.

"My lady...I think we need to withdraw...until more favorable opportunities present themselves..." wheezed Malaki.

"No, you have caused more than enough trouble for myself. You are going to die, fighting that null walker, the one chasing you, and I will explain...actually quite truthfully how I had nothing to do with the Night Furies," said Hel, coldly.

"What? But that's unreasonable!" protested Malaki.

"No, that is completely reasonable and you will do it. Or maybe you should spend the next hundred years as a rat like the null walker suggests," said Hel. Suddenly, Malaki felt his ears starting to change shape and his height starting to drop.

"Ok...ok...and if I best him?" he said quickly, causing Hel to think for a second.

"You will get a headstart from Thor," she answered

Malaki just started dumbfounded. "I take it you're considering the rat option again?" asked Hel.

"No..." moaned Malaki gloomily.

"Good, now go out there and prove you're an elf," said Hel with a nasty smirk.

Malaki glared before running past Hel and into Matt's sights. "PEEKABOO!" he yelled, tossing a plasma orb that blew Malaki off his feet. As Malaki was getting back up, Matt said, "How'd you like to be cooked, rare, medium, or well-done? Actually, I'm not that great at cooking rare."

Malaki glared before tossing a blade that hit Matt's ankle. Matt just laughed insanely at that, pulling the blade out and breaking the end off. Malaki reached for another knife only to find he was all out.

"All outta choppers?" sneered Matt.

"Not just yet," snarled Malaki before drawing a short sword and

charging at Matt. Matt growled, spinning and pushing Malaki into a wall. "This isn't the last fight," snapped Malaki, "I will be back. And when I return, I will make you and all you know suffer so badly you'll beg for death."

Matt glared, kicking the legs from under Malaki. Malaki swiped out with his sword as he tripped, managing to catch Matt across the chest. Matt gasped a bit before delivering a kick that connected with Malaki's jaw, flipping him back. "I'm gonna enjoy this," he growled, picking up Malaki by his collar and punching him again.

However, Malaki grabbed Matt's wrist and twisted it to force him to let go. Matt just growled before headbutting Malaki. Malaki staggered at that, seeming to have lost focus. Matt roared, grabbing Malaki and headbutting him again before dealing a jaw punch. There was a crack that certainly meant that Matt had broken some of Malaki's teeth if not his jaw.

"Told you I'd kill you," hissed Matt, getting Malaki in a headlock. Malaki struggled, but it seemed his strength was ebbing. Matt glared continuing to choke before, with a cracking noise, Malaki went limp...only then did he let go.

"I suppose I should arrange for a funeral pyre," said Matt callously before dropping a plasma orb on Malaki's body and setting it on fire. He turned to see the gang, plus several Asgardians. "Crap." he muttered.

Then the blonde warrior holding the hammer said, "You fought well. Not just any mortal can hold their own against a dark elf. But then, most can't conjure plasma from their hands.

"Not human," said Matt, more or less on automatic.

"I imagine so," said the warrior, "In case, you're not familiar with who I am—"

"I know who you are," said Matt, "Thor the Thunderer, Prince of Asgard, God of Lightning, I've seen your statue around a few times." He paused and added, "Though it had a much bigger beard."

There was a large pause...the sort where the second half could go to either laughter or head removal. Luckily it went into laughter as Thor burst out laughing. Thor walked over and said, "I like your spirit, warrior." He clapped Matt on the back, but the unintentional strength behind it made Matt's knees buckle.

"Ow..." rasped Matt as Chris asked "Ok, now this is all sorted, can we go home now?"

"I can easily transport you all back to Midgard," said Thor before he turned to look at Astrid and Fenris, "Fenris, you know you are welcome to return to Asgard. And I'm certain this fine young warrior would make a welcome addition."

The others looked horrified at that, Stormfly hissing angrily at that. "Thunderer, she didn't ask for these powers. They thought it was a simple mortal trinket," said Fenris calmly.

"She seems to be handling them well now," said Thor, "Your tutelage

is to thank, no doubt."

"That said, I do not think she wants them." said Fenris calmly, adding "It was always a choice."

"There have been so few wolf warriors who have been able to enter Asgard," said Thor, "It seems a waste to let one with promise go."

"Please, I really don't want this," said Astrid, a little nervously.

Thor sighed and said, "You're young, you have several paths to choose from and don't know which to take. Perhaps when you are properly grown you'll take up the title of wolf warrior again."

Astrid nodded nervously, Fenris also sighing with relief. "Erm...so how do we get out of here?" asked Matt as Thor began spinning his hammer.

...

After a light-engulfed experience, Matt suddenly found himself surrounded by a lot of wet. Thor had apparently not followed, choosing to probably make sure no orcs followed. As such, Matt had to wait a minute or two before someone helped him out.

"Shouldn't have been standing out on the edge so much," said NegaMorph, happy that someone besides him was having bad accidents tonight.

Astrid however looked miserable. "I'll have to go to Asgard?" she said.

"Hey, it's every warrior's dream to go," said Snotlout, "Not that I'd be wanting to go right now. I have a dragon to train and stuff."

"I don't want to go...not yet," said Astrid, more to herself.

"Once you convince your inner self you don't want the power, I think Asgard will withdraw its interest," said Fenris.

"They will," said Matt, more or less to himself.

"So how am I supposed to convince myself to not want the power?" asked Astrid.

"That is up to you," said Fenris before saying, "Until then however, as I said before, you will need to learn."

"Speaking of learning," growled Chloe before stomping towards Chris, "I think someone needs to learn a lesson about buying cursed merchandise."

...

The next morning, Chloe was sipping some hot cocoa on her bed. She frowned before saying, "This cocoa isn't fresh. FLUFFY, GET IN HERE!"

Chris walked into the room, with two black eyes, a bandaged jaw, and a pink collar with the nametag 'Fluffy' on it. "You called, my lady?" asked Chris.

"Yup, fresh cocoa," said Chloe with a smirk.

"I shall fetch some for you as soon as I can, my lady," said Chris.

Chloe snapped, "Don't go yet. I got a few more things."

"Such as, my lady?" asked Chris.

"Well, I want my bathrobe washed and dried as finely as possible, as many sweet-scented herbs gathered up as possible, and you to find the best hot spring for a bath and don't take all day," said Chloe.

Chris sighed. "How long are you going to make me suffer?" he asked only for a thunderbolt to hit him and him to rasp, "My Lady."

"Oh, I think three days ought to do, might tack on some more if you get sloppy," said Chloe.

Chris glared muttering, "I shoulda glued that thing on."

"What was that?" asked Chloe.

"Nothing...my lady," said Chris darkly.

As Chris left, Chloe was pretty sure he heard him say, "...liked her better as a rabid wolf..." but she let him off with that one. Buying that bracelet for her was an accident, though an avoidable accident. Still, she had to make sure that cute guy learned his lesson.

Chloe paused at that, wondering where the random thought had come from before shrugging, putting it down to residualness from the werewolf episode.

* * *

><p>And there's another chapter. I would have posted it last week, but I had some difficulty with my computer. A lack of technical cooperation if you will. Anyhow, this chapter's the start of an arc that'll stretch on for a few chapters at least. And we'll be dipping even further into Norse mythology, though mainly drawing reference from the Marvel versions. In case you're wondering, Fenris and the wolfstones are inspired by the Man-Wolf. Anyways, Hel is definitely not going to be attacking from just one side and there will be more trouble from her and perhaps others. The next chapter should be up next week unless there are more complications. Keep an eye out for it and please review.<p>

13. Of Dwarves and Giants

****Voyagers Saga****

****Broken Nest****

****Chapter 13: Of Dwarves and Giants****

"Personal log. Fenris keeps asking to use the training facilities to help Astrid get to grips with that damn stone in her chest. On a related note, Zao, we'd have better luck cutting her head off and expecting her to survive than if we tried to operate to get it out...bloody magic. Oh, and Chip keeps asking about that damn construction company..."

...

Matt ceased writing as Chip, in her organic disguise came into the Berk quarters. He was on Berk to keep up the appearance that he was still learning dragon riding with Kala. "Ok, Trixie, if this is about that investment, I'll give you the same answer: never in a billion years will I agree," he said, not looking up.

"Right now, the only construction I'm concerned about is rebuilding of that frozen freighter so we can finally get off this planet," said Trixie, "Which is taking too long for me to comfortable with."

"Techo says everything's fine. Just needs defrosting. She'll fly without any help. We'll then sweep the wreckage for your...employees and head to Avalar, job done. There will be NO construction job. Anyway, you're a collaborator with me, you'll be arrested," said Matt, sitting back.

"Well at least you acknowledge that you've actually noticed their prolonged absence," said Trixie, "Those poor guys must be going mad stuck in orbit like that. I just wish our sensors could actually pick them up."

"We gotta be careful...or are we forgetting the empire team that was with the marauders? What if there're other ships in the area?" scolded Matt.

"Well, I think I've found a way to speed up the progress, I just need the captain's permission first," said Trixie before handing him some papers.

Matt sighed. "Fine, fine," he said, signing on the dotted line.

"Thank you," said Trixie before heading off.

...

Over the next few days, Matt began to notice some strange things...well strange for them. For a start, Chip seemed to have a lot more 'bling' for a cyborg. There was also a lot more of the expenses paperwork...which puzzled Matt as, given they were now classified as pirates, he shouldn't have to do expenses paperwork. Another odd thing was that he kept coming across empty sockets where pieces of equipment should be, but when he came back to them later, they were back where they belong.

He brought this up during training on Berk. "It's weird. You'd think, as a space outlaw, I wouldn't have to pay bloody bills. They don't even write it in a language. All weird runes," he called.

"Uh, have you actually seen who's been working on the ship?" asked Hiccup.

"They're all mercenaries too," snapped Matt.

"So you haven't paid attention to the guys who have been hired to repair your ship," said Hiccup.

"Who? The shortarses? I thought they were Davua PMC mercs," said Matt, before Kala, snorting from annoyance, rolled to send him down, catching him at the last minute to the disappointment of Steampipe. Once Matt was back in his saddle, he said, "I take it that's a sign I've missed something glaringly obvious."

"Matt...can I take a look at these notes?" asked Hiccup carefully.

"Sure, catch," said Matt, tossing them over.

Hiccup caught the book before he and Toothless landed on one of the rock pillars, the others landing as he read. "It's probably nothing..." Matt began as he dismounted.

"Uh, Matt, I think your workers might be dwarves," said Hiccup.

"I think they prefer the term 'vertically challenged'," said Matt, "Though I'll admit I've been thinking of them as 'midgets' and 'munchkins'."

"No...I mean they're actually dwarves. These are dwarfish runes," said Hiccup urgently, Matt taking the offered page and looking at it before pausing.

"Ok...Chip...Chip...Chip..." he said, saying Chip's name more manically each time as he screwed up the page...which then combusted.

"Uh, that's not necessarily bad," said Hiccup, "I hear dwarves are very good at smithing and construction."

Matt wasn't listening, just saying "Chipchipchp." before he screamed angrily and threw himself off the pillar, rising back into view in dragon form and heading in the direction of his base. Kala just covered his eyes with her ear flaps and said _"Oh boy, he's lost it."_

...

Matt landed back at the base and shifted back to human form. He walked into the base and started towards Chip's quarters. As he went, he suddenly found the dwarves a lot more noticeable as they were chipping at the ice and patching up wires from machines.

One of the dwarves called out at that. "Oi, creepy guy, hold this a second, would ya?" he asked. Matt paused as he tried to decide what to do before he walked stiffly over and held the panel in place for a minute till the dwarf was done. The dwarf screwed the panel back into place before saying, "Thanks, mac," and then heading off. Matt nodded stiffly before continuing on his way.

...

"Now look, we agreed on the price," complained Chip, a dwarf union head in front of him.

"Well you forgot to figure in the realm-crossing tax, and that's taken up a good amount of the profit with all the coming and going," said the dwarf.

"Realm cro...you gotta be kidding me. Dimensional travel is not taxed," snapped Chip before pausing in terror as his door exploded inwards.

"CHIIIIIIIP!" roared Matt's voice.

"I'll let you talk with your captain for a bit," said the dwarf before backing to the far end of the room.

"Don't even move, shortarse!" snapped Matt, pointing a finger at the dwarf before advancing on Chip. "So...sneaking a few letters into the paperwork, eh?" he hissed, stomping forward.

"Well, you agreed to hiring help and you never bothered to ask who would be hired," said Chip.

Matt glared before punching Chip's desk, breaking it in half. "I want the weirdy beardies OFF MY BASE!" he screamed.

"Hey, we got a contract!" said the dwarf, "More than a few actually."

"Which you are overpricing above what is probably union standards," said Chip.

Matt turned angrily. "You can go or I can give in to a draconic urge and EAT YOU!" snapped Matt.

"Oh, that sounds like a safety threat of draconic nature," said the dwarf, "Sounds like that clause in the contract is in affect now and you know what that means."

"Haven't you gotten enough payment already?" asked Chip.

"Leave or I have my men shoot you!" snapped Matt.

"Uh, Matt, it can't be solved that, er, simply," said Chip, "It seems that one part of the contract states that if open hostilities are acted upon the dwarfs, they have the legal right to go to war against us and dismantle this ship."

Matt turned at that, snapping, "YOU LET THEM WRITE THAT? Why didn't Sue read it first? SUE...SPIDERBOTS, BRING ME THE LAWYER!"

Quite soon, Sue was dragged in by the spiderbots. She took one look at the dwarf, stuck her nose in the air, and said, "I don't do mythical creatures."

"Yes you will or I'll disintegrate the coconut cake," hissed Matt.

Sue hesitated before saying, "Sorry, but I'm trying to establish a respectable legal adviser image for my future law firm and people would be less likely to take me serious if they know I've been openly working for fairy tale creatures who don't exist."

Matt snarled, grabbing Sue. "Take a good look, you're not on Kauai anymore, you're in nullspace where it's weird shit 24/7. Nobody will care," he hissed.

"And I didn't ask to be here now, did I?" said Sue.

"So you're on strike? Mutiny?" said Matt with a crazy look before Chip managed to get Sue away.

Just then, Fenris poked his head into the room and asked, "What is with all this commotion? I am trying to meditate."

"SILENCE!" snapped Matt before turning to Chip and demanding, "Where did you even get dwarves in the first place?!"

"Oh, I showed him how to contact the Construction Guild in Nidavellir," said Fenris, apparently missing the source of Matt's current hostility.

Matt glared at Fenris at that. "You...you caused this? Good...you can help me FIX this," he snapped.

"I don't see what is the big problem," said Fenris, "They're just seven dwarfs as per Construction Guild standards."

"Then you haven't been keeping up," said the dwarf, "There's been a lot changes in the Guild and there has to be additional sub-contracts signed. I'd say there are about 25 dwarves working right now, of course that could change what with our going back and forth to get mroe supplies."

"25?" snapped Matt, shaking the dwarf he was holding.

Fenris frowned and said, "Oh dear, this could be a serious problem."

"Ya think?" snapped Matt, dropping the dazed dwarf.

"I'm not just referring to your financial problem," said Fenris, "With so many passings between Midgard and Nidavellir, it weakens the realm's walls and makes it easier for beings from other worlds to come here."

"We ARE beings from other worlds...hold on," said Matt, walking to an intercom and saying "ANYONE NOT ON MY CREW, 2 FEET HIGH AND WITH A BEARD YOU CAN LOSE A BADGER IN, GET THE FUCK OUT MY BASE!" Matt turned back to Fenris and said, "You were saying...wait, you don't mean that that pointy-eared creep could just walk right, do you?"

"Not precisely, Svartalfheim and Niflheim are among the Lower Worlds."

Matt looked confused at that, Chip saying bluntly, "You need to dumb

it down a little." earning a clonk from Matt.

"The Nine Realms are divided into three different places on Yggdrasil," said Fenris, "Svartalheim and Niflheim are in the Lower Realms at the roots of Yggdrasil. The Higher Realms such as Asgard are located in the upper branches. Midgard and Nidavellir make up two of the Middle Realms of the lower branches, but the constant crossing will make it more open to the third realm, Jotunheim."

"Wait, I know this one, that's ice giant land, right?" said Matt, before looking at the shocked expressions. "What? I know things."

Chip looked puzzled before saying, "Ah, you read it in a comic then."

Matt glared and sent a plasma burst at Chip, screaming "SILENCE!"

"So, you're saying that all the dwarves' shuttling has pretty much put up a 'come on in' sign for those ice giants?" asked Sue.

"And I bet they won't be coming over to ask for a cup of flour," said Chip.

"GET THE FLAMETHROWERS! Do we still have flamethrowers?" said Matt, asking the second half at Chip who nodded, causing Matt to point dramatically, yelling "GET THE FLAMETHROWERS!"

"Calm down," said Fenris, "Unless there's been an army of dwarves moving back and forth, I don't think the walls between realms are that easily penetrable. The worst that could come through without assistance would be a Jotuntier and probably not a very large one."

"What's a Jotun-whatever?" asked Matt, pausing at the door.

"It's a large beast that's native to Jotunheim, the Jotuns have trained some to be war beasts," said Fenris, "So I suppose even a small Jotuntier would be a problem."

Matt deadpanned before saying, "Get the napalm too." into his wrist comm.

"One has to be actively looking for the weakpoint before they can make use of it," said Fenris, "Maybe it'll be overlooked."

"Knowing our luck...OI, WEIRDY BEARDY, where are you and the other dwarfs popping in at?" snapped Matt.

"Your mom's house," snapped the dwarf.

"SPIDERBOTS!" snapped Matt, half a dozen of the dreaded mechanical monsters popping out of impossible places, one even popping out Chip's storage hatch.

"I thought one had tagged along on the way back," said Chip.

"What do mean 'on the way back'?" asked Matt. "We've been going to the Smokebreaths' nest to get most of the spare metal," said Chip,

"The dwarves typically pop over there before heading back through Nidavellir and appearing back here."

Matt glared at the dwarf. "Have you met the spiderbots? They actually tamed Smokebreaths...and I am their boss. So unless you play ball, I'll tell them to do whatever they want to you," he said with a crazy smile.

"Well, now, we know the two places where a Jotun would most likely show up," said Fenris, "I'm guessing here would be most likely."

Mat nodded, not looking away from the dwarf. "It'll most likely be their arrival point. So tell me, Grumpy...or is it Happy? Where's your entrance? You have 10 seconds before I tell the spiderbots you and your tiny friends are free targets."

"In the basement!" yelled the dwarf.

Fenris frowned and said, "My chambers? You haven't been stealing any of my stones, have you?"

"We wouldn't dare, mate," gulped the dwarf, looking at the spiderbots all making 'snipping' motions.

"Good, then I better get ready for any uninvited guests down there," said Fenris.

Matt nodded, saying into his comm, "Flamer units to Fenris's crib. Meet us down there."

"Matt, shouldn't we-" started Chip.

"All I want to hear from you for the next 24 hours is that you've figured a way out of that stupid contract," interrupted Matt before pointing at Sue and adding, "That goes for you too."

Sue crossed her arms and was about to reply before Matt clicked his fingers and the spiderbots covered her in something that set rock hard in seconds.

With that, Matt and Fenris walked out of the room. "They're going to pay for this insult," grumbled the dwarf before walking out.

Chip looked at the blasted door on the floor and said, "Now how am I supposed to fix this?" A spiderbot wandered over to the door, pushing it up as if to fix it before spinning and repeatedly hitting chip with it, the others cackling.

...

The weather on Berk was not known to be particularly balmy. In fact, there was plenty of snow during a good part of year. Still, the temperature was dropping a bit too quickly than normal today.

Kala, who had remained behind when Matt had left on his 'exterminate Chip' mission looked up. "Hey...is it supposed to be getting this cold this fast?" she asked curiously watching as ice literally formed before her eyes.

"It's a bit early this season," said Toothless.

"Ok, now it's getting nippy," growled Kala, shaking her tailfin to get some ice off.

"I hope it's not gonna be another one of those mega-blizzards," said Toothless.

Kala was about to inquire about the 'mega-blizzards' when they turned to see Bucket wandering by, moaning about his tight helmet.

"Yep, it's a mega-blizzard alright," said Toothless, _"Bucket's helmet always gets too tight when a bad storm's coming."_

"Crap..." muttered Kala before she looked up and noticed a problem, _"How long does it take for the storm to arrive after the helmet thing?"_

"Depends on how bad it hurts him," said Toothless. There was a prompt howl of agony from Bucket. _"Looks like within a few hours."_

Kala nodded doing some mental calculations before saying _"So where are the clouds?"_ nodding towards the clear horizon.

"They can arrive pretty quickly, but something doesn't seem right. Mega-blizzards shouldn't be arriving this quickly and unexpectedly," said Toothless.

"Hey...I taste steel," said Kala before her ears went flat.

"What does that have to do with it?" asked Toothless.

"Null rip, it's how Morph gets some of his pets," said Kala grimly before realizing she wasn't carrying the audience and she said _"Tear in the universe full of tentacled things that eat faces."_

"And it's happening here?" asked Toothless.

"Probably, sometimes they're really small. It's fun to see a one inch high demon threaten us before we step on it," grinned Kala.

Suddenly, a sharp wind started blowing from the north, causing icicles to form on anything solid. _"Ok...so it's not demons. We'd be on fire by now if it was,"_ said Kala slowly. An icy mist filled the village, as snow started to fall in dollops. _"Ok...definitely not normal. We'd better find the kids before they flash freeze...except Astrid,"_ said Kala.

Toothless lifted his head and sniffed, _"Something's coming."_

Kala looked confused before sniffing and gagging, _"Ack...it smells like Matts last attempt at cooking."_

"No, not Mildew, something else," said Toothless.

Kala stopped before sniffing again and shivering as her own brain processed the magical scent. _"Something big, cold, and pissed off,"_ she said weakly.

"We gotta find some way to tell them," said Toothless. Kala sighed, wishing that Weirdwolf wasn't permanently confined to base. She had a feeling she coulda used him as a go between to the gang.

However, the need to communicate the danger may not lie in their paws anymore as Mildew came running into the village screaming. _"Either a Terrible Terror crawled up his shirt for warmth or he just met our surprise guest,"_ said Kala.

A second later, a barrel flew down, thrown by whatever had terrified Mildew. _"I'm almost tempted to wait till it's finished with the old folgey,"_ said Kala calmly before seeing the others, _"I'm joking...mostly."_

"Mildew, what is the commotion this time?" demanded Stoick.

"FROST GIANT!" screamed Mildew.

"Frost Giant? It's not the time of year for them," said Gobber calmly.

"Tell that to him!" yelled Mildew, pointing back towards the icy mist.

Everyone turned to look at the mist before a small icicle spear shot out, falling a little short. There was the sound of large footsteps as a large shape appeared in the mist. Eventually, they could see what looked like a large man, 10 feet tall, who was entirely made out of ice except for the light armor he wore. He held a large ice club in his hand and wore a helmet that looked perhaps a size too large for him. But something that caught attention was the way his arms and legs were quite translucent and reflected light more than the rest of him.

"That's an ice giant? He looks like a sneeze could break him," said Kala with a deadpan tone, ignoring Barf's warning of _"They always do...right up till they hit you."_

"Mortals of Berk!" shouted the frost giant, though not in quite as deep a voice as one would expect, "I have come to face the Troll King or his son. Tell me where I can find them and I'll spare your village from freezing solid."

Hiccup called out, "I'm afraid they were already beaten by Gary...Gary?" The Vikings looked back in time to see Megan facepalming as Gary could be seen running around a corner.

"What? Are you pulling my leg?" asked the frost giant.

Megan sighed at that, saying "It's true. I was the damsel he rescued," she said, making a mental note to use a shadowfire blast on the icy smartarse if he even grinned.

"Oh great," grumbled the frost giant, "Is able to do another fight soon?"

"I could try and catch him but I don't think so," said Megan, making a note to have a talk with Gary later.

"No, I mean the Troll King or his son or any of the tougher trolls," snapped the frost giant.

"No, I don't think they'll want to, not for a while. They...have other problems," said Megan.

...

While the petrification of the trolls wasn't permanent, they soon found they had another problem that seemed to be here to stay. Matt had, in a worrying level of thoughtfulness, thought ahead and had left a dozen spiderbots, as the trolls were finding out the hard way. Judging from the mayhem, it would probably be several decades before they'd be able to raid a larder, let alone Berk.

...

"Yeah, I think that their calendar's full for the next millennia," finished Megan.

"Ah man," groaned the frost giant, "Don't you have any elves, dwarves, or orcs here to fight?"

"Not that we know of," said Stoick, feeling a little confused by this. Usually rampaging giants weren't this polite.

The frost gave a groan of frustration before saying, "So I came all the way here for nothing?"

"We have some dragons who like to go for a few rounds," said Tuffnut.

"Yeah, especially our dragon," said Ruffnut.

The frost giant seemed to gulp at that. "Erm, not thanks," he said shakily,

"Maybe you'd like to take on a real Viking for a challenge," said Spitelout, holding up his sword.

"My dad says, er, I mean, my honor says that I cannot accept challenges from mortals that could easily be frozen," said the frost giant, "So if there's nothing here, I'll just go check out that other spot now." With that, he turned around and disappeared back into the mist.

There was a pause as the mist vanished before a Viking at the hall called "What in Niflhelm was that?"

...

Matt had gathered up quite the anti-frost giant force in the basement. Everyone there had a flamethrower and there were more than a few napalm bombs ready to be set off. In fact, Warden was a little worried they'd bring down the whole iceberg if they were used.

"Ok...how tall are these giants usually, Fenris?" said Matt, annoyed.

"On average, they're about 15 feet high," said Fenris, "But there have been some that can be 20 feet high. In fact, I once battled a mighty jotun that was 25 feet high."

"So...the size of a T-3, did anyone bring the plasma launcher?" called Matt as mist began to form.

"May I remind you that the more heat you use, the more damage you'll cause to your surroundings?" said Warden's voice.

"I DON'T CARE!" screamed Matt as the mist was now more of a fog, something inside it before a deep voice said "Puny mortals...is there none among you who can challenge..." it began before coughing.

"LIGHT EM UP!" yelled Matt.

There was a high-pitched shriek and a rumbling as something tapdanced to avoid the blasts. "Are frost giants supposed to squeal like that?" asked Chloe.

"That means they're giving in! Pour on the firepower!" yelled Matt before Fenris sighed and bonked him over the head.

"Let's see exactly who we're up against first," said Fenris.

The mist cleared to show the ice giant who had appeared in Berk, hiding behind a ruin. "What is WRONG WITH YOU?!" it yelled.

"Where are the rest of you?" called Chloe.

"It's just me, you nutcase!" snapped the giant, its voice betraying that it was clearly very young...though the size also proved that.

"Just one? Er, obviously he's one of their fiercest...warriors..." said Matt, looking more than a little sheepish.

"Not really," admitted the ice giant, coming out once he realized he was in no danger of incineration

The other troopers were already starting to leave and grumble about this being a waste of time. "Hey, I had a good reason to be paranoid!" snapped Matt.

Fenris however looked annoyed. "You know that your people are not allowed on Midgard, right?" he snapped.

"There was an open door," said the frost giant, "It seemed like a good opportunity."

"What is your name?" asked Fenris. "I am Billingr, son of Krim," said the frost giant boastfully.

Chloe giggled before saying, "I'm sorry, your name's Billy Krimsson? That's too funny." Billingr gave Chloe an insulted look before blowing hard at her, causing her to fall over. Chloe winced because that ice breath also caused a layer of ice to form on her front. "I should have worn a thicker shirt," she said.

Matt was also grinning, "Ok, we know your story now bog off home before I make you explode."

"Hey, I came here to find a fight and I'm not going until I get one," said Billingr

"Life's full of little disappointments," said Matt before Chip commed him.

"Good news, I found the cracks and sealed them."

"Great, are the dwarves gone?" asked Matt.

"Well, no, but I found something interesting. I think a piece of the Bladestorm's finally fallen out of orbit. It landed on an island not too far from here. Nobody there but wild dragons," said Chip.

Matt paused at that as he realized what else the closed crack meant. "Great, we're stuck with Mr. Frosty."

"I'll try to find some way to get him home," said Fenris, "Or at least tell his parents where he is."

"Fine, I'll go check out that wreck," said Matt.

"But what about my fight?" asked Billingr.

"Go squish Morph, always helps me relax," said Matt.

...

The island itself was mostly on fire when the Lynches landed, choosing to go in dragon form to minimize the chance that they'd be attacked. "Musta been big," commented Matt.

"Think it'll still be of use?" asked Chloe.

"We can always melt it down for scrap metal," said Matt.

The two padded in, the duo wearing a new earpiece each, a prototype translator for the local dragons. Chloe had rightly gotten the idea that maybe talking would help. They were already being watched by a cluster of Deadly Nadders as they headed inland towards the impact site.

"Hi there," called Matt, "First time something fell out of sky here?"

The Deadly Nadders simply remained silent, though they began to glare. "Ooookay. Tough crowd. Look, we just wanna find what fell out the sky...ok?" said Matt nervously.

"You don't want to go near it," said one Nadder.

"It's dangerous," said another.

"Oh please, we eat danger, it tastes like chicken," sneered Matt.

"Not like this," said a third Nadder.

"Well, at least we know the translators work," said Chloe, "If only we could hear something useful."

The Nadders hissed angrily at that, causing Matt to say bluntly, "I'm surprised you can talk with that foot in your mouth."

"Oh you do worse on a daily basis," said Chloe.

"Let's just go before you piss em off even more," said Matt with a sigh.

The two of them headed further inland towards the heart of the fire. Of course, Matt had to blast some burning debris out of the way. "Ok, something creeped them out. You don't think it's more spiderbots, do you?" said Matt, worried.

"Since when have they ever fallen to Earth in giant balls of fire?" asked Chloe.

"These are spiderbots we're talking about. Nothing is beyond them," said Matt darkly.

"If it was spiderbots, they would have mugged us by now," said Chloe.

"Good point," said Matt, peering out to see a crater. "HELLO? ANY SPIDERBOTS?" he yelled before Chloe covered his mouth. However, the crater was suspiciously empty. "Yep, definitely spiderbots," said Matt, "Nothing else could get up and walk away."

Chloe however was looking down. "What about the footprint?"

Matt looked confused at that "What footprint?" only for Chloe to say "The ones we're inside."

Matt jumped backwards and looked down. There were footprints, but not nearly as big as Chloe said. Still, they were pretty large, two toed, and let away from the crater. "Another giant?" he gulped, looking around.

Chloe got her head close to the footprints and sniffed, "I don't think it's another frost giant. Smells more burned than a frost giant could...wait, are those tire treads?"

Matt shot up at that, knocking her over to peer and see an embed. "Only one person has a spiderbot's signature on it. It's one of the Cybertronians," he said before noticing he'd knocked Chloe over.

"Well, they shouldn't be too hard to spot," said Chloe as she got back up, "I mean, a giant robot ought should stand up like a sore thumb." Just then, a large log hit both Matt and Chloe from behind and sent them bowling over into the crater.

"Got ya! How'd you like that, mon?" yelled a familiar voice.

...

Dune Runner air punched as his log shot sent the two dragons flying. They'd been chasing him since he'd landed and he'd finally managed to show them not to mess with him. "Got ya! How'd you like that, mon?" he called out triumphantly before pausing as a familiar voice said in a stone cold voice. "You have ten seconds to remove this log...1...2..."

"Wait, are me audio receptors workin' right?" asked Dune Runner before tapping the side of his head.

"DUNE RUNNER!" yelled Chloe's voice angrily, a thunderclap heard.

"Ya, dat's dem alright," said Dune Runner before walking down and picking up the log.

"Dune Runner...why did you throw a log at us?" said Matt in the same tone.

"I thought you were one of dem wild dragons that attacked me for no reason," said Dune Runner.

"Ok...I can handle that," said Matt, desperately as Chloe asked "Ok...where are the others? The last thing we need is cave paintings of a cement mixer with a Napoleon complex being discovered in Essex."

"Dirt Boss is a forklift, Mixmaster's de cement truck," said Dune Runner, "But don't worry, nobody's gonna find any sign of dem for a couple thousand years, I tink."

"Where are they?" asked Matt, inwardly fearing the answer.

Dune Runner scanned the skies a bit before saying, "Up dere," pointing at the rising moon. Matt and Chloe turned to look before Matt settled for screaming in anguish. "What are you screamin' about? You're not de one who's been stuck on de moon for, well, moons. Or has it been longer? It's so hard to tell when days pass up dere," said Dune Runner.

"They'll break history...how do you think the world will respond when Neil Armstrong steps onto the lunar surface and sees a forklift?" screamed Matt.

"Hey, we ain't stickin' around dat long," said Dune Runner, "Ya got some kinda ship ready, right?"

"Not exactly..." said Matt slowly.

"Please tell me it's at least nearly ready," said Dunne Runner.

"No," admitted Chloe.

"Excuse me, I need ta pound someting," said Dune Runner before walking over to an intact tree and started pounding his head against it.

"How do you think we feel? We were attacked by psychotic zombie pirates." snapped Matt.

"At least ya had someting interestin' ta do!" snapped Dune Runner, "Ya have any idea how borin' de moon is?!"

"You could have drawn 'Megatron sucks' on the surface," suggested Matt.

"Dat was fun for about a megacycle," said Dune Runner, "But ya run out of tings ta do pretty quickly. Even the Constructicons got bored with buildin' dat moonbase and death ray."

"They're building a what now?" said Matt, before Chloe said "Look, it's not that bad. We need help with some of the ship systems...plus you'll get first pick of the quarters on the ship"

"Yeah, sure, wait, where'd they get supplies to make a moonbase?" asked Matt.

"From the pieces of dat big snake robot and de Bladestorm," said Dune Runner, "Don't worry, it's on de far side of de moon and even de humans of our time hasn't got dere yet."

"Well they dismantle it before they leave," muttered Matt before saying "Come on, let's get ba...ooooh. Something just happened."

Dune Runner looked around in confusion before saying, "I don't see anyting. So how am I supposed to get back? Me hoverboard's broken and I'm too bent up to transform."

Chloe sighed, shifting back to human...or at least to humanoid to both her companions' surprise before she got on her comm. "Control, we need a heavy drop ship here, we found Dune Runner."

"That's great," said Chip's voice, "Where are the Constructicons?"

"On the moon and out of trouble," said Chloe.

A line of angry tantalog was heard before Chip said, "That's fine. Matt, how angry would you be if dwarves have turned up?"

"That would be equivalent to the amount of dwarves that have turned up," said Matt.

"Oh dear god," muttered Chip's voice before he said slightly manically, "That's good cause hardly any turned up at all."

"At least tell me that the snowman's keeping out of trouble," said Matt.

"The who? Oh, the frost giant. Well, he went outside. He can't melt that easily, right?" asked Chip.

"HE WHAT?!" snapped Matt, the comm exploding from sound overload.

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"Hello? Hello." said Chip nervously.

Morph, who was in the corner, said, "Did you forget to pay the bill again?"

...

"We are going back...NOW!" snapped Matt.

"Ok, ok, calm down now," said Dune Runner before asking, "Have you gotten bigger since we came here?"

Chloe and Matt turned at that, looking down at Dune's feet...well, his knees. The rest were going underground. "TROLLS!" screamed Matt, spitting several fireballs down.

"What da?" said Dune Runner before noticing he was sinking. "Hey, cut dat out!" he yelled before pushing against the ground with his four arms. However, something grabbed his hands and started pulling them in.

Chloe swiped aside some of the earth to see a familiar bearded face. "DWARF!" she yelled before spitting lightning at it. The dwarf quickly popped back below ground before a sudden wave of earth knocked Chloe onto the ground. "Ok, now I am really YEEEEK! Who pinched me?!" she yelled, "Someone's gonna lose a hand for that!"

Matt turned before someone grabbed his tail and pulled him so he fell over. "Take off! These little pains are worse than graboids!" he yelled, taking off...or trying to.

"Guys, I'm running out of height here," said Dune Runner who was up to his shoulders.

"GRAB THE HEAD! THEY'RE DETACHABLE." snapped Matt, lunging forward, slightly too late as, with a pop, his head vanished down.

"Ok...this is bad," said Chloe.

"Yeah, being robbed by dwarves," said Matt, "If anyone asks later, they had hired trolls, big ones."

"Riding dragons," said Chloe with a nod, the two taking off.

...

Hiccup and the others were heading for the gang's base to warn them on the off chance that the frost giant was coming to their place. It seemed Matt was having a bit of management trouble judging by the way he was strangling a dwarf outside.

"For the last time, you are not allowed to steal the base. That was not in the contract...I assume...just nod," he was hissing at a struggling dwarf.

"Matt, what are you doing?" asked Hiccup.

"Oh, just negotiating," said Matt before shaking the dwarf and saying, "Have I made myself clear, you cheating little..." There was

a ripping sound before the bottom half of the dwarf fell off. "...two piece?" said Matt weakly.

There was a thud as Fishlegs passed out as Matt looked down to see a tiny little guy in the bottom half, holding control levers. "Oh, now what? SPIDERBOTS! DETAIN THE SHRIMP!"

While the spiderbots were swarming over the little guy, Matt ripped the shirt off the dwarf's top half, revealing a similar little guy with mechanical arm extensions. "Even for dwarves, you guys are puny," said Matt.

"Those aren't dwarves," said Billinr as he walked over, "Those are gnomes."

"Gnomes now," twitched Matt, stabbing in and pulling the panicking gnome out. "You're even bite size," he smirked, letting his teeth transform.

"Don't eat me!" squeaked the gnome, whose voice wasn't as deep now with the vocal filter of his suit. Matt twitched for that before laughing, transforming to hybrid form. This only made the gnome freak out a bit more, much to Matt's amusement.

"A dragonman? I didn't think those things existed," said Billinr, "Hey, I challenge you to a fight. A duel between warriors of strength."

Matt felt the hand go on his shoulder and slapped it away, hearing a breaking noise and Billinr snap "Oh, not again." and a thud as Fishlegs fainted again before he turned to see that the hand was still on his shoulder...but there was nothing else.

"Uh, sorry, I didn't mean that to happen," said Matt a bit worriedly.

"Forget about it," said Billinr sadly as his stump regrew another hand, "Happens all the time."

Matt turned his attention back, to see the gnome had gotten loose and was vanishing down a portal. "Oh bugger," he moaned.

Fenris came out of the base, his armor looking a little disheveled. "Matt, we have a problem," said Fenris.

"Let me guess, the dwarves have a gnome surprise inside when you break them open," Matt said sarcastically.

"Yes, which explains quite a bit," said Fenris, "Gnomes may be smaller and smarter than dwarves, but they're more likely to be...obnoxious. Is that a hand on your shoulder?"

"Yes, its Billinr's," said Matt, Fenris staring for a minute before he fainted too, more from surprise than anything. "Totally worth it," said Matt with a smirk.

"Great, I was hoping for a quick victory before someone found out," grumbled Billinr.

"What, breaking off hands and regrowing them isn't common for frost

giants?" asked Astrid.

"Only if you have crystal limbs," said Billingr, "Which only the worst jotun have."

"Well...that sucks," said Matt before remembering, in all the mayhem before he said, "Do they usually steal tech?"

"How should I know? Dad would barely let me leave home, let alone see other realms," said Billingr.

"Fenris, same question...cause a load of dwarfs stole Dune Runner," said Matt, annoyed.

Fenris had gotten back up and said, "Well, I have seen gnome mechanisms, but they haven't quite reached Asgard's level yet. Gnomes disregard magic for science, which is often why dwarves are said to be better."

"Then a giant robot would be the holy grail," said Matt calmly before yelling, "WE'RE NUKING THE GNOMES!" getting a cheer from the mercs in range who all charged towards the hatch, Chloe just sighing.

"Do you even know where they are?" asked Chloe.

Matt paused before saying "LETS NUKE ALL THE REALMS!" getting an even bigger cheer.

Chloe snapping "NEGAMORPH!" as she saw him joining in as Fenris said weakly "This may not end well."

Morph came up from the base and asked, "Hey guys, what's going on?"

Matt stopped, his short attention span stopping him and the mob to pause before he pointed "GET MORPH!" the group charging after Morph who, in a rare case of common sense, screamed and ran away.

"He'll be fine," said Chloe, "Look, we need to tell the dwarfs that they have impersonators."

"Oh, you mean those seven dwarves all tied up and wearing only underwear I found in the closet?" asked NegaMorph.

Chloe glared before saying, "Show us."

...

A little later, the shivering dwarfs, wearing shirts too large for them, were brought before Chloe and Fenris. "Ok...at the moment, my brother wants to nuke you all for stealing a member of our crew, just so he can get the gnomes that mugged you. Tell us what's..." began Chloe only for Sue to come in.

"Pardon me, Ms. Lynch, but I can't have you interrogating my clients under such poor conditions," said Sue.

"Sue...my mood can be described as apocalyptic...and I will see how much volts it takes to destroy an experiment if you don't stop. This is serious. Dune Runner's been kidnapped so for once, DROP THE DAMN

VENDETTA!" snapped Chloe, losing her cool.

"But can you not see these poor dwarves are freezing? They need to be bundled more considering how long they've been captive in a very cold place," said Sue.

"They will answer my questions or I will let Matt start shoving bombs down that rift," snapped Chloe icily.

Sue sighed before turning to the dwarves and saying, "Gentlemen, I'm afraid she is not going to be reasonable."

"What...happened?" snarled Chloe, one of the dwarfs clearing his throat. "Well, crazy lady. We got mugged by a bunch'o low down dirty gnome golems."

"Gnome golems, as in they've made their own robots?" asked Chloe.

"Course they do, we buy em off em," said a second dwarf as if it was the most obvious thing in the world before making a mistake and saying "Women" and receiving a lightning bolt.

"Let's try to keep to the story," said Sue, "So you were the dwarves originally hired to work here, but the gnomes mugged you and took your place. And then they started bringing in more gnomes?"

"No...some of em are real I think," said a third dwarf.

"They're after the ship. It's got dozens of nukes. Those old behemoth classes used nukes as the main artillery...the old dirty models...before the clean nukes were developed," said Chloe distantly as she got a bad idea before she said into her comm, "Techo, inventory the ship's arsenal, NOW!"

"What do these gnomes want with all those weapons?" asked Sue, "Don't the dwarves and gnomes live in peace?"

"Mostly, but these are the Rokati Clan gnomes," said the fourth dwarf, "They're a whole bunch of troublemakers who do things from starting profit wars from pouring slop from atop buildings. But they've never done anything like this before."

"Nukes should probably do it. We need to go there," said Chloe, glaring at the dwarfs, "If I hear one complaint about 'not outsiders' I will obliterate you and let the gnomes nuke you all."

"Fine, but we have to have some proper Midgardians come," said the sixth dwarf, "The Dwarf King won't be accepting excuses if you just came."

"Proper?" hissed Chloe.

"Yeah...ye disguises suck, dragon," said another dwarf.

...

"So, you want us to go to the dwarf realm?" asked Hiccup dubiously.

"Yeah...Dune Runner's there...musta been an accident," said Chloe, wincing as Matt called "Ok...I got the Geiger sensors and the PR-51 laser rifles packed."

"I dunno, the last time we went to another realm wasn't a good experience," said Hiccup.

"This is dwarf land, not zombie land," said Chloe sagely.

Fenris, who had been filled in on the situation and why nukes weren't being mentioned nodded, "The realm we are going to is perfectly safe."

"Besides, gnomes are easy to beat when you separate them from their gadgets," said NegaMorph.

"Or shoot them with disintegrators," called Matt.

"I'm not so sure about going on an adventure with a frost giant," said Snotlout.

"Wait, who said that we're bringing him?" asked Matt.

"Well, it didn't seem like a good idea to leave him at the base," said Fenris.

"You can come with us...or stay with THEM," said Chloe, smirking as a few passing spiderbots paused and turned to look at Snotlout in the same way piranha eye lunch.

"So...we need to bring anything?" asked Fishlegs.

"I suggest lunch, wouldn't be surprised if they offered gems for snacks," said Matt.

...

Travelling between realms can easily be described as...uncomfortable. "Arrgh...my brain's on fire!" screamed Matt, after being dumped out.

"Are you gonna whine every time we go through a portal?" asked NegaMorph as he looked around. If Svartlheim was the realm of shadows, Nidavellir was the realm of stones. Mountains and cliffs filled up the horizon. They were currently standing on one of the few plateaus that allowed the dwarves and gnomes to raise crops.

"I prefer wormhole travel via a ship," groaned Chloe, who looked equally green. The kids and their dragons also looked a little dizzy. In fact, the only ones still upright were Fenris, the dwarves and NegaMorph.

Even Billings didn't make it through easily. Though it wasn't so much the nausea as it was the vibrations had caused his limbs to break.

"Pull yourself together," groaned Matt at the ice giant as several dwarf warriors were spotted heading for them in a bad mood.

"Why do they look so mad?" asked Fishlegs.

"For starters, you're standing on the potato plants," said Fenris.

"What's a potato?" asked Tuffnut, looking down at the seemingly-insignificant stalks. "A New World veggie, you guys don't need to know about them yet," said Matt.

"That and ye technically holdin' us hostage," said one of their dwarf companion/prisoners.

"Ok, this is gonna take some serious smooth-talking," said NegaMorph, "Matt, don't say a word."

"Oh please, I'm not that bad," snapped Matt as the patrol arrived.

"Ok...who are ye?" the leader snapped.

"Just a bunch of guys who have been scammed by gnomes and we're here to complain and give back the guys they mugged," said Matt, which was shortly followed by the sound of several palms meeting their owners' faces.

"Ye honestly think we'd believe that?" said the leader with a deadpan expression.

"Ask then, they'll vouch for me," said Matt, pointing at the dwarves they brought.

One of the dwarves nodded reluctantly, saying, "He's not nuts, mates. It's true."

The dwarves blinked before they started laughing heartily. "Ye got mugged and stripped by gnomes? That's as pathetic as they come," said one.

"Hey, they were Roket gnomes," said one of the dwarves.

The laughing cut off at that and the leader sighed "Them again? What they steal this time?"

Matt said promptly "Giant robot."

"What kind of giant robot?" asked the dwarf.

"About 10 feet tall, red, four arms, has built-in missiles, he's actually a pretty nice guy," said Matt.

"Can't say I've seen one. Now go back tae Midgard and we'll let ye...wait, isn't that the little tin can who keeps hirin' workers?" said the dwarf, pointing at Chip who yelped.

"Er, I should probably mention that I was not aware they were actually gnomes and they've been tying me up with red tape to stop me from protesting to their union heads. The latest attempt was quite literal," said Chip.

"SILENCE! Ok, always wanted to say this, take me to your leader,"

said Matt, a deafening clap being heard as everyone in range facepalmed in unison.

...

They didn't end up going directly to the Dwarf King. Instead, they were taken to see the head of the Construction Guild, who was rather unhappy about the way his dwarves were being treated.

"I'm Mr. Chip's commander, my signatures were gotten fraudulently," Matt was explaining, Sue looking a little impressed.

"And I had no knowledge that the so-called dwarves I've received were imposters," said Chip.

"It don't matter. Ye signatures on the papers so it's all legal," snapped the guild head, Matt glaring at Sue, mouthing 'Do something'.

"Might I mention that the other party's signature has also been falsified," said Sue, "I doubt that the dwarf named Clori was the one who actually signed the document."

"I'm over..." began one of their 'prisoner's before Wilson earned a commendation by knocking him out 'accidentally'.

"They never even had a chance to start working before they were assaulted," said Sue, "And I bet that they haven't seen one leaf of this paperwork those imposters have been pushing."

"Has work been done to ye sky ship?" asked the guild master, Matt nodding only for the master to say, "Then the work's been done, we're due payment."

"With all due respect, the gnomes' fee was extremely inordinate," said Chip, "I think we can both come to an agreement on a lesser fee...once we get back the money those gnomes got."

"Ye got one day, then we take ye ship," said the guild master calmly.

Chip and Sue knew Matt well enough that there'd be no way to calm him down from that. So they just quickly got as far out of the way as they could. Worryingly however Matt remained calm. "The gnomes stole something else," he said manically.

"Yes, they stole a good friend who happens to be built out of advanced technology which shouldn't fall into the wrong hands," said Chip as he grabbed Matt and started pulling him out of the office.

"But that's not all, they have n-" started Matt before Sue covered his mouth with slime. "No manners whatsoever," said Sue, "You wouldn't believe the messes they've left. I've even heard they've been seen rifling through the women's underwear drawers if you can believe such things."

The guild master nodded, "Sounds like something they'd do." causing Matt to break the slime covering, scream manically and charge the guild master.

...

"You know we're only supposed to be using the mindwipe gloves on civilians who shouldn't be aware of freaky stuff, right?" asked Techo.

"Hey, it was that or lose the ship," said Chip, "There was no way that would have been pardoned. I just hope the false memory about the gnomes planting a hair removal bomb in his desk won't be questioned."

"Ok, we gotta find those gnomes before they decide to add mushroom clouds to the landscape," said Chloe.

"Or before Matt loses his temper and does it himself," said Chip.

"That might not be long," said Fenris darkly, as the group followed their loony leader

...

Meanwhile, the kids had been sent off to check another part of the mountain, though they expected it was mostly to keep them out of trouble. Which would be a good reason why Billingr was sent with them. Draco had also been forced to go along as a babysitter. "Don't take it the wrong way. Look on the bright side, not many people get to explore dwarf land," he said cheerfully.

"It's just a bunch of rocks," said Snotlout.

"Rocks with enough precious metals to buy a small star system," said Draco absently before covering his mouths.

There was a pause before Hiccup said, "Fishlegs, have you been letting Meatlug eat different rocks here?" A loud belch from Meatlug pretty much confirmed it.

Draco was the first to ask "Is there a particular reason that would be important?"

"Well, I imagine we'd get in trouble if the dwarves found out we were smuggling precious metals out in a dragon's stomach," said Hiccup.

"Probably...from what I read on them, they'll probably either chop us up or chop us up and turn us into golems," said Draco calmly.

"Meatlug can just spit out later," said Fishlegs, "We're just getting ammo for when we fight the gnomes." "Wise up, they're never gonna let us fight," said Billingr, "They've just gotten us out of the way just like my father would have."

Draco sighed, "Probably not, but it could get messy. Dune Runner's armed to the teeth...and if they have him under control when we find him..."

"Who is this Dune Runner anyways?" asked Hiccup.

"Well...for simplicity's sake, let's say he's a four-armed metal giant. Not quite as big as metal giants can go, but he has plenty of weaponry," said Draco.

"Does Matt know anyone normal?" asked Ruffnut bluntly

Draco paused and counted on his fingers, having to extend a few extra arms before saying, "Well, I suppose Alice and Lao are normal. That makes about...two."

Astrid however paused. "Hey, someone's coming," she hissed. The group quickly moved into a side tunnel where they couldn't be seen, though it was a tight squeeze for Billinrg and the dragons.

A second later, a group of gnomes walked by, dragging a large cone alone. "Urgh...couldn't the void walkers make their weapons lighter?" complained one.

"Just what is this thing made out of anyways?" complained another.

"It's one of their megaweapons. Enough to destroy those dwarves on one single blow," said a third, clearly the leader.

"That'll show them who's the better smiths," said another gnome.

"Uh, we didn't make this," said one of the first gnomes.

"Who cares? The other gnome clans won't dare question us," said the leader gnome.

Astrid looked at Hiccup, mouthing 'What is that?' before they both noticed that Draco seemed to have no trouble recognizing whatever it was. "Draco, is there something we haven't been told about?" asked Hiccup.

Draco turned in horror at that just as one of the gnomes said "Hey...what was that?"

"I think it was one of those big bats," said another gnome.

"Right, and I'm a head of lettuce," said the leader gnome sarcastically, "Go find it!" Draco glared at Hiccup at that as one of the gnomes, holding a gnomish rifle, walked towards their hiding place.

"Wait, it's just one little guy, what are we afraid of?" asked Snotlout.

There was a click and a fist sized hole appeared in the rock above Snotlout's head along with a deafening bang at that. "Alright, you little whelps, get out where I can see ya!" shouted the gnome.

Draco sighed. "Way to go," he said before popping into sight and spitting an ice blast at them. "RUN AWAY!" he yelled.

"You call that an ice blast?" said Billinrg before breathing a freezing wind at the gnomes. Draco rolled his eyes as the dragons

also joined in, the gnomes getting into a firing line to apparently protect their prize.

One of Stormfly's magnesium bursts landed rather close to the cone. "Hey, careful with that!" yelled Draco.

"So? It'll just break it," called Astrid, Draco yelling "And if that's armed, we'll all vaporize along with the mountain...oops."

"We'll do what?!" asked Hiccup.

"You didn't hear that," snapped Draco before they noticed one of the gnomes, wearing a backpack, the weapon with a crackling crystal on the end. "You might wanna take care of that gnome first," said Draco. Toothless quickly obliged spitting a plasma shot at the gnome. The gnome yelped before trying to run away, only for the backpack to be hit. The blast was quite big, though it backfired, knocking out almost everyone. It would have been an easy clean-up for what few of the gang was left standing, but apparently the gnomes were supposed to rendezvous with more gnomes and they had evidently got impatient.

It also didn't help that these gnomes had golems. "What in the nine realms happened here?" complained one of them, the golems stomping out to loom over the dazed Vikings and dragons.

"Looks like we got a couple of tagalongs," said another gnome, "I thought Dermi had shut those portals tight."

"Guess not, the Midgardians may make good golems and that...weird one," said another golem, pointing at the unconscious Draco.

"Forget the Midgardians, we've got an even bigger prize," said another gnome, pointing to where Billings was lying dazed.

"He's no threat, look at him. He's got crystal limbs." sneered the gnome who had suggested the golem-ing.

"At least we'll get some dragon leather," said another gnome.

"No, there's a Night Fury there and we're not got enough of these to deal with Asgard yet. They can help pull the device," said the gnome, nodding to the golems to grab the group.

Fortunately, Astrid was conscious enough to move further out of the way. Still, she knew she hadn't gotten far enough to escape the gnomes' line of sight. 'I hope they don't notice me,' she thought, unconsciously touching her amulet which glowed a little.

She winced as a golem turned to look in her direction, its single red gem eye glowing ominously before, after a far too long wait, it turned away, dragging Stormfly off by the tail. As the kids were being dragged off, one of the gnomes said, "Hey, this one's missing a leg."

"Eh, he's a runt anyways. Leave him," said the leader gnome.

She turned her head to see Hiccup being left behind, the group trudging off laughing, a golem dragging the device away. After a few

minutes she jumped up and ran over to Hiccup...or tried to, falling over as her legs turned to jelly under her. The backpack explosion was obviously still effecting things. It didn't help that the room seemed to be swimming around her either. But she kept fighting against the urge to pass out.

Sadly the backpack was better and she fell forward, the last thing she heard was a voice saying "Hey...where'd the lass come from?"

...

The main search party hadn't been so fortunate and found nothing but rocks. "Don't they have anything down here but rocks?" snapped Chloe, "Can't they, I don't know, leave some veins of precious ores visible on the wall to break the monotony?"

"I believe they mine all of them," said Matt a tad sarcastically before Techo snapped "There's too much rock, the scanners can't find shit. We ought to go, get some of the better gear."

"We don't have time to do that. Those gnomes aren't going to wait for us to find them," said Matt.

"Any better ideas? Should we wait for the healthy green glow?" said Techo sarcastically.

"Maybe we should get the dwarves do some looking of their own. It's their mountain that's gonna get blown up, they should be helping," said NegaMorph.

"Dwarves are difficult to convince to do anything they don't want to. They can be shockingly stubborn," said Fenris calmly.

"I know a lot of people who can relate to that," said Chloe dryly.

"Speak of the dwarf, incoming tinys," said Matt as a couple of dwarf guards came up.

"Ye name Lynch?" asked one of them.

"Depends, is there a bounty on that name?" asked Matt.

"There's a couple of Midgardians in the infirmary," said the dwarf calmly.

Matt immediately became serious and said, "Take us to them."

â€|

The group literally burst into the infirmary, despite the healers objections, to see Hiccup and Astrid sitting up in their beds. "What the hell? What happened? We just heard," said Chloe.

"We came across a group of gnomes dragging something that Draco said was a big bomb," said Hiccup accusingly.

Matt sighed as Chloe snapped, "I told you we should have said

something."

"What was I supposed to say? That the ship we're trying to dig out is carrying several bombs capable of obliterating an island?" snapped Matt.

"They can what?" yelled Astrid.

"We weren't planning on using them at all," said Matt, "We would have dismantled them after we left. We've been a bit busy dealing with the ship itself."

"And now insane gnomes have them," said Techo, annoyed, before nudging Chloe and pointing to where Astrid was getting amber eyes, her stress irritating her 'other side'.

"Astrid, losing your temper now won't help anything," said Chloe, "You need to calm down so we can focus on finding those gnomes."

"They took our friends, dragons and Draco. They talked about golems," Astrid snarled, the healer giving a warning look at Fenris, proving that the story of his gems was known even here.

"Save your rage for the gnomes," said Fenris, "Once we have found, you can unleash your fury upon them."

"Yeah, that's the spirit," said Matt before turning to the guard, "Where were they found?"

...

Draco was just starting to come around. Of course, opening his eyes didn't help much considering everything was swimming all around him. "It's awake. Good. It works better when they are conscious," said a high pitched voice that Draco couldn't help but laugh at...till he noticed he was manacled down. 'Ok, shouldn't be worried about this, I can lift 6000 times my own weight,' he thought to himself.

"Ah, I suspected as much when I checked the muscle density. These manacles are good for twice that amount," said the voice calmly.

"Hey, who's been eavesdropping?" snapped Draco.

"Just process him, a golem with those abilities will make it so we don't need that bomb," said another high pitched voice.

"Yes, chief engineer," said the first with a sigh.

"Hello, I'm a living creature, not a lump of clay! Making golems doesn't work that way!" shouted Draco. "You've never seen a gnomish golem made, have you?" said the first voice, Draco's vision returning to see he was stuck on some kind of table, several gem devices moving into position and a white cloaked gnome standing to the side.

Draco moved his head and looked to the left, seeing what looked like a mechanical version of himself on a table nearby. "I'm already not liking the implications," said Draco.

The mechanical version also turned his head and said in a tinny imitation, "I'm already not liking-liking-liking the implications of this."

"Ok, I've definitely stayed here far longer than I wish," said Draco before struggling to get out.

"Oh, I'm afraid you are not going anywhere," said the gnome calmly, the device powering up before, first a beam hit the imitation, causing it to judder. Draco gulped as his own began to glow.

...

Fortunately, the dwarves knew the main tunnels like the backs of their hands. They were able to point the gang in the direction where the kids had been and as soon as they got close, they were able to recognize it. "This is where they passed," said Hiccup, Astrid and Fenris looking around.

"At least Contrinus is back at base. She'll kill us if something happens to Draco," muttered Matt.

"Um, hello, I'm the one who's been providing you with most of the light," said Contrinus annoyed.

"Yeah, yeah," said Matt before tripping over something that groaned.

"Wow, that was easy," said Chris before picking Draco up, "Draco, where are the others?"

Draco gave him a walleyed look before holding up his hand and saying, "Pull my finger."

Everyone paused at that, Contrinus saying slowly, "Bushu bu...are you ok?"

"Ducky!" said Draco before wriggling out of Chris's grip and falling onto his head. After that, he just giggled.

Contrinus paused before snapping "WHAT HAPPENED TO MY BOYFRIEND?!" The sign that she was pure rage was that she was using English...not helped when Draco licked her.

"You taste like curry custard," he said.

Chip tapped on Draco's head, which produced a hollow coconut sound. "I think the gnomes stole his brain. Which is rather odd because his body would be much more useful to them," he said.

"Unless they had a better idea. YOU, BEARDY! You are now called Grumpy. How do golems get made around here?" snapped Matt, pointing at one of their dwarf guides who jumped back in shock.

"Well, they can be made all kinds of way, clay, stone, even metal and gears. Controlling them is often done with a rudimentary intelligence, but they can be powered by a mind removed from another creature. Which is strictly forbidden by law-abiding dwarves and gnomes," said the dwarf.

Everyone turned to look at Draco who was having a headbutt competition with Morph before Matt said "I think we got some evidence that our gnome friends are using that procedure."

"Think they used it on the others?" asked Hiccup. "We'll only be able to tell with Fishlegs," said Astrid dryly.

Contrinus however was shaking Draco. "SNAP OUT OF IT!" she shrieked in his face, causing him to focus for a second.

"The dwarf seat go boom," he said.

"Is that supposed to mean something?" asked Matt.

"Hopefully it doesn't mean something unmentionable in the bathroom," said Chris.

"I see dead people," said Draco sagely before drooling.

Morph looked at Draco. "Is it me or is something different about him?" he asked.

"Well, we know they won't put your brain in a golem," said Matt.

"Ok...Draco...do you know how you got here?" said Chloe overly loud, holding up a hand to stop interruptions.

"Uhuh," nodded Draco aimlessly.

"Erm...we're playing hide and seek...but you got to find them...and yes, you've already counted to 100." Draco saluted in a worrying imitation of Mac in 'duty mode' before charging off down the tunnel. "FOLLOW THAT MORON!" called Matt, earning a fireball from Contrinus and a trampling from everyone else as they indeed followed.

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"I dannae get it. That mine's been closed for ages," said the newly christened 'Grumpy' the group looking out at the activity below them. There were more than a few dozen gnomes going about back and forth with pieces of equipment. Quite a bit of it looked like it was pilfered from the cruiser.

"Little gits!" snapped Matt, being held in check by the others.

"Look, we need to be smart, we can't get angr..." began Contrinus before staring as something came out one of the entrances. It appeared to be a clockwork version of Draco, made mostly from copper and bronze. It had modeled after his fully extended alien form, though it looked like they could only make one operational mouth.

"Bushu bu...BUSHI B-mmmph!" she began, before Techo and Wilson jumped on her, Wilson tying a rope round her beak...at least till she calmed down. Grumpy however seemed to have run off.

Matt sighed once they realized. "We don't need him...hey, that's

Kala...what..." he began, seeing Kala and Stormfly hooked up to two wagons full of ore. "They're using my girlfriend as a packmule?!" growled Matt, who soon had to be gagged by NegaMorph.

"Look, we've got to get down there," snapped Chloe before a high pitched voice said "We could help you there."

They turned to see a bunch of gnomes holding blasters. "Oh, and me without my bowling ball," said NegaMorph dryly.

There was a clang behind them and the group turned to see a mechanical Night Fury. "Ok, didn't expect them to be make tik-toks out of the dragons," said Chris.

"Take em away!" snapped one of the gnomes.

...

A few minutes after the group had been dragged off, the air seemed to ripple and two anthro wolves rippled into view. "Phew...I didn't expect you to master mistwalking," said Fenris, running to the view to peer down.

"I was just trying to avoid being noticed," said Astrid.

"It worked. I hadn't planned to teach you it till at least the next lunar phase. But now is as good a time. Follow me," said Fenris, quietly shimmering out of sight as he stalked down. Astrid sighed before following, noticing her shadow vanishing as she moved forward and Fenris reappearing.

She hadn't noticed it last time, probably because she was close to passing out, but everything now had a faint blue tinge. "It isâ€exhilarating, yes," said Fenris, noticing her look before stopping to see Astrid looking at Stormfly. "We can help them once we have freed the others. Even we cannot stop an army," he said calmly.

"So how exactly are we supposed to stop them even with the other's help?" asked Astrid.

"Oh, I know a couple of tricks for dealing with gnomes," said Fenris, "And if the Rokkat clan are related to who I'm thinking of, this could be rather simple."

"What's your idea?" asked Astrid out of curiosity, shuddering as a gnome walked through her...literally.

"Admittedly, a good part of it hinges on if your friends brought what I suggest for lunch. But if not, I wouldn't be surprised if the black aberration has them stored wherever it is he keeps things," said Fenris.

...

Meanwhile, as the two wolf warriors were headed into the mine tunnels, Matt and the others were in what Techo, in his diary, called 'their natural environment'...a cell. "Nobody knows...the troubles I've seenâ€" sung NegaMorph gloomily before Matt hit him.

Their missing pals had also been located...opposite them. "So...I guess we found out where the gnomes are, at least," said Fishlegs.

"Yeah...this plan has not gone well," muttered Matt sarcastically, looking over at where Contrinus was trying to get the attention of the Draco-golem.

The sad part was that it was likely that while Draco could probably only control his voice, his mouth had been wired shut to keep him from complaining. "Bushi bu...please!" snapped Contrinus desperately perking up as Draco finally turned to look at her, walking over...and pushing her back from the bars before returning to his post.

"It's ok. We'll get him back," said Chloe kindly.

"I should have never left Jotunheim," groaned Billingr, who had his arms chained heavily to the wall of his cell, "The others were right, I'm nothing but an embarrassment to my family's line."

"Hey, don't say that, takes balls to head out alone," scolded Matt, who for once wasn't singing.

"It would have meant more if I came back with something better than how I've been beaten by gnomes," said Billingr.

"Billingr..." started Chloe.

"Oh, just call me Billy. That's what everyone else calls me when they're not calling me 'Glass Arms', 'Snowfingers', 'Stumpy Legs', 'puny little runt', or-"

"My father's scrawny son," said Hiccup at the same time as Billy.

Billy seemed surprised at that, "I thought it only applied to my people."

"Yeah, Hiccup's a runt," said NegaMorph, "It's right in his name there. Guess you frost giants don't call your runt of the litters 'Hiccup'. But he's gotten a lot farther than other Hiccups have gone. He managed to down, tame, and train a Night Fury, the rarest dragon of them all. He all but single-handedly stopped a generations-long war between his clan and dragons, not to mention take out a Red Death. He's invented many new devices to help with dragon-training and has learned more about dragons than any Viking alive. And you know how he's managed to do all this? Because he never gives up."

Billy seemed to listen before saying to himself, "Never gave up."

Hiccup nodded before everyone shook as the 'cloak spell' wore off and they remembered who was missing. "Oi...where's the pooch and Astrid?" Matt called.

...

Fenris and Astrid were closer than they thought, heading past several guards, following the classic logic that anything under heavy guard

was important and therefore should be smashed as soon as possible. Of course the trouble with mistwalking was that while they could go through living things, doors still had to be opened to pass through.

"Ok...move when I do., said Fenris, the two watching as a couple of engineers walked in their direction, clearly about to enter the room their prize was inside. As they approached the door, Fenris held up his fingers and counted down before the door opened and the two wolf warriors simply stepped through the engineers and into the room.

They had expected some strange gnomish creation...what they got was being caught in the crossfire of several dozen Jamaican sounding swearwords from a gigantic metal golem in the middle of the room. Perhaps 'gigantic' was too strong a term seeing as it was about 10 feet long laying down. And it wasn't totally all in one piece as the head, which oddly enough had a visor and two smaller eyes as well as what looked like a long-brimmed metal hat, had been removed from the rest of the body and was still mouthing off the gnomes.

"Just you wait till de boss finds ya. He'll roast ya where ya stand!" yelled the head, the gnomes all rolling their eyes, this being a regular thing it seemed. The duo crept forward before freezing as the head seemed to stare at them, its eyes glowing red for a second. "Oi...who are those two?" he snapped.

The gnomes paused and looked around. "I don't see anybody," said one gnome.

"Better be safe than sorry, turn on the burglar buster," said another.

"Aw...not dat ting again," moaned the head as an ear-screeching shrill pierced the air, Fenris and Astrid covering their ears in pain. For a normal person, this sound would have been incredibly annoying. For someone hearing as sharp as a canine's, it was unbearable.

Fenris was surprisingly the one to snap, de-misting and smashing the device. "Good eye on the golem, freeze furry!" snapped one of the guards, aiming his rifle...only for it to bend at a right angle and a hidden blow to send him flying into the wall. The other guards looked confused before Astrid hit another one as she re-phased into existence.

"One of you, reattach me scrappin' head!" snapped the head angrily as the guards outside began bashing to get in.

"Why should we trust you?" asked Fenris as he threw a gnome into his fellows, "You just gave away our positions."

"I didn't know you were cloaked. Dese morons got me vision stuck on thermal," snapped the head.

"And how do we know you won't smash us all when you get your body back?" asked Astrid.

"We don't go around squashin' people for fun," said the head calmly.

Just then, more gnome guards had come into the room, armed with heavier weapons. "It looks like we have no choice," said Fenris before jumped over and grabbing the head.

"Easy, dat's me noggin yer holdin', not a shield," said the head.

"Ok, put it down," snapped one of the guards, the lot of them aiming.

Fenris shrugged and said "Ok," dropping the head onto its body.

The reaction was quick as the head seemed to sprout cables that rapidly reconnected. "Finally...now I'm gonna teach ye little oompa loompa's not ta take Dune Runner's head," the golem snapped, stretching before getting up. The metal bar that looked like the front of its body opened up, revealing sockets that had missiles in them. The gnomes froze as the missiles started warming up before the panel closed up. "Made ya look," said Dune Runner before throwing the chunk of ceiling he had ripped off and threw it at the gnomes.

Fenris and Astrid were shocked to see the bot easily knock the gnomes out. "Ok...now how are ya? I owe ya one for springin' me but I gotta get back ta Lynch and the others," said Dune Runner, causing Astrid to say "You know him?" causing Dune runner to laugh "Know him? His messin' around's the reason I exist."

"Well...we do need to spring them from their prison," said Fenris, "Though I'm not certain we'll be able to manage enough stealth now."

"But we can mistwalk," said Astrid.

"There's a limit to how long you can do it in one day," said Fenris, "Besides, it's less effective when they're specifically looking for you."

"Well, if stealth's out, than I tink speed be in order," said Dune Runner before folding in on himself and forming some kind of metal vehicle on wheels.

"What in the..." began Fenris only for the vehicle to say in Dune Runner's voice. "We goin or are ya gonna stand dere with mouths like guppies?"

...

Eventually, the gang was led out of their cells, though heavily shackled. But they weren't being led to the brain-swapping room yet. Apparently, the head of the clan had a penchant for 'motivational speeches' and gave one every hour before the event involved happened and the prisoners were brought in to bear witness.

Matt was also talking to the others. "Ok, this will no doubt be full of ego, crap and rubbish. It will help if you just imagine 'blah blah blah'," he said until a guard kicked his shin.

"No talking till the mechromancer's given his speech," he snapped as

a gnome sitting in a skeletal mech suit/chair thing stomped into view.

"Presenting, his most innovated and brilliant genius, Ruggedo the Renegade!" called an announcer gnome.

"That's Ruggedo the Remaker!" snapped the gnome in the mech before turning towards his audience.

"Soon...our oppressor, the dwarf king and his ilk will be no more, eradicated by the weapons of the void walkers. Soon gnomekind will be free again," called Ruggedo before Matt called out "Free to make others bang their heads on the ceiling.", though Ruggedo, to his credit, managed to ignore that.

"Too long have the dwarves ignored our genius and choose to focus on their backwards mysticism. But we gnomes shall show all that true power is not crafted with archaic forces, but with intelligence and scientific method. Soon, we shall face our enemies," began Ruggedo, only for Matt to heckle "While standing on boxes, obviously."

"Don't trifle with us, off-worlder," snapped one of the guards watching Matt, "The gnomes are an ancient and powerful race. All Vidanillir trembles at the power of our genius and-"

Matt sighed before kicking the gnome over. "You're still shortarses," he said.

"I did not have you brought here for your criticism," snapped Ruggedo, "You are to bear witness to our rise in power in about two hours."

"You mean I gotta listen to your drooling for another hour or two?" groaned Matt.

"Will someone clap something over that mouth of his?" snapped Ruggedo.

"I'm not gonna lean down," sniggered Matt. However, two of the guard gnomes simply grabbed Matt's shackles by their chains and yanked him down onto the floor. "Ouch, you're stronger than you look," said Matt before a gnome clamped an iron mask around Matt's head.

"As I was sayingâ€¦" began Ruggedo before he noticed the Vikings. "Ok, void walkers I can get. We've got their machine after allâ€¦but who brought the runt?" he snapped, pointing at Hiccup.

"I'M the runt here?" asked Hiccup incredulously.

"Shut him up and take him to the doctor. He can be of some use," snapped Ruggedo. A set of gnomes started yanking Hiccup's chains and pulling him away.

"Leave him alone," said Billy, his voice booming in the large cavern.

"Oh please, you're clearly infected with crystal degradation. No threat at all," sneered Ruggedo.

"True, my limbs are weaker than most giants'," said Billy, "I'd be

more likely to break my arms than snap these shackles. But then again, that isn't as much of a problem for me." With that, he started exerting his strength against the shackles. There was a cracking sound soon after, but it wasn't the shackles. With a loud crack, Billy's arms broke into ice fragments which scattered around. But his shackles had fallen off with them and his arms soon grew back to swat a swathe through the gnomes in front of him.

Ruggedo didn't seem too worried as Billy stomped towards him, readying a ice 'sword' on his hand. "You don't think I'm not prepared?" he sneered before pulling a lever and a tiny hatch opening on his 'mech' to reveal a cannon.

Billy quickly blew hard at Ruggedo, creating a freezing wind that quickly coats with ice. Sadly that didn't work as Ruggedo laughed and pulled a lever, the cannon letting out a stream of liquid flame. "A Midgardian invention. Greek fire, they call it." Billy staggered backwards. It took a lot more fire than that to melt a frost giant to a puddle, but his limbs were going soft and losing mass. A rifle shot caused him to fall over as it shattered his foot and the gnomes grabbed him again. "Don't try that again," snapped Ruggedo.

"I probably won't have to," said Billy, "You have no idea of who you've set yourselves up against."

"In an hour it won't matter." said Ruggedo.

...

Hiccup's captors locked him onto the table while the engineer in charge was looking at several of the combat grade golems. "Hmm...ranged or close combat...what do you think?" he said absently to Hiccup. "To be honest, I prefer ranged," said Hiccup.

"Ranged it is. You two, bring the tempest model to the table," the engineer said calmly, looking at two golems in the room, one of which was Draco and pointing to a sinewy golem that had several of what Matt and the others would know as Atlantean staff weapons attached to it.

"Can't I have something a little bit...bulkier than that?" asked Hiccup.

"It's tougher than it looks. Oh, it's nice to actually meet a kindred intelligence around here. Nobody appreciates my designs. It's a shame that you won't be as open minded afterwards," said the engineer with a happy tone as Draco and the other golem put the 'tempest' onto the other table.

"Draco, now would be a good time to exert your free will," said Hiccup.

"He can't hear you. The control rod renders him completely under the holder's control, mine in this case," said the engineer calmly showing a small unassuming metal pole with a glowing jewel on the end.

"Ah, that explains it," said Hiccup.

"Now then, this may sting," said the engineer, readying the main

device before a crash from outside made him roll his eyes.
"Urgh...idiots," he began, setting the devices countdown before sending the non-Draco golem to the door...which was immediately crushed as Dune Runner smashed it down.

"I may like bein' metal, but I don't tink de boy would de way you're doin' it," said Dune Runner, "Now let him go or you're gonna have ta deal with some real trouble."

"Golem, destroy that thing," snapped the engineer, the end of the control rod glowing in time with Draco's 'eyes' causing him to lunge at Dune Runner.

"Hmm...dis guy reminds me of Draco," said Dune Runner as he grabbed Draco with two arms, "I'm guessin' dat's not a coincidence."

"It is Draco...whoever you are," said Hiccup, getting a little panicky as the crystal got closer and began to glow.

"Be with ya in a minute, mon," said Dune Runner as he struggled with Draco.

"I hope I have that long," said Hiccup.

Hiccup gulped and had about prepared himself for his fate when Fenris and Astrid literally appeared, Fenris looking at the controls.

"Urgh...gnomes and their contraptions," he snapped.

"Who needs to control it?" said Astrid before pulling out her daggers. With those words, before anyone could stop her, she leapt up, digging her claws into the side of the machine, causing it to spark and shriek.

"Astrid, that was probably needed for returning Draco to his rightful body," said Fenris annoyed.

"Oh please, I could fix it in my sleep," said the engineer, who was hiding before he stopped and snapped, "Oh, sod it."

Fenris walked over and picked the gnome up by the leg. "I suggest you start fixing it then and quickly," he said.

"Take that control rod, it's what's making Draco unfriendly towards us," called Hiccup.

"It's also what may be keeping him sane," said the gnome calmly only for Fenris to growl "We'll take our chances." before he bent the rod in half.

The Draco golem stopped struggling against Dune Runner and his head started spurting and making little shakes which were as close as he could probably get to twitches. "Draco, mon. You ok?" Dune runner asked before dropping Draco as he screamed.

"I warned you it'll drive him mad, but no one listens to the smarter gnome," said the engineer gnome. Dune Runner grabbed Draco and began shaking him. "Snap outta it, mon."

"I got heads to bust!" snapped Draco before bending Dune Runner's fingers backwards and jumping out. Dune Runner looked at his

misaligned fingers before saying, "Ouch."

"Told you," sneered the engineer only to be slapped.

"Fix that machine," growled Fenris, adding, "Astrid, you and Hiccup go with Dune Runner. I will make sure that our friend here continues the repairs."

"But how are we supposed to defeat an army of gnomes?" asked Astrid.

"With this," said Fenris, holding up two bags that messy green paint on one side.

"The twins' lunches?" asked Hiccup skeptically.

"If I am right about this clan, they're deadly allergic to these," said Fenris, pushing one of the bags towards the engineer prisoner who recoiled like a dragon in front of an eel.

Hiccup and Astrid shrugged before taking the bags. "We better hurry. If I know Matt, he's probably pushing Ruggedo into ordering their executions any minute now," said Hiccup, "Or Matt's about to blow with pent-up frustration."

â€|

It turned out to be the first, via lava bath. "You do realize this won't work on dragons, right?" called Matt. "Maybe, but even dragons need to breathe and those chains will keep you from swimming back up," said Ruggedo.

"Unpleasant little shortie," muttered Matt as Ruggedo left them with the guards.

"Ok, who's first?" asked one of them.

"I say we do the frost giant first. Always wanted to see what happens when you dip one in lava," said another gnome.

Billy gulped a bit at that before cocking his head, "You hear that?"

The group listened and could hear the sound of metallic clicking and psychotic giggling. "Hmm...that sounds somewhat familiar," said Chloe.

"Can't be, I'm right here," said Matt before he and Chloe jumped back to see the Draco golem skid round the corner.

"YAY, ITS MAH BRAIN!" called his brainless body.

"I'd hope this would mean he's gotten control back, but I know the giggle of mania too well," said Matt.

"Which one of you stole my BRAIN?" screeched the Draco golem manically.

"Hmm...think it was one of those guys," said Chip, indicating the gnome guards, "Not sure which one." Mecha-Draco, as Matt was thinking

of him as, screamed angrily before lunging at the gnomes. "Great, they're being dealt with," said Chris, "Now about us getting out of these shackles?"

Draco, who had just finished off the last gnome growled "Where's Contrinus?"

"Over here!" called Contrinus.

Mecha-Draco's head shot round 180 degree's owl style to look at her before he ran over to her, pushing Chloe aside. Chloe managed to keep herself from going into the lava pit and said, "I'll excuse it this time since he's not in his right mind or body right now."

Draco was just hugging Contrinus. "This is just a nightmare...right?" he asked.

"Well, not quite," said Contrinus, "But we'll be waking up as soon as we've stopped those gnomes."

"No...I want out...I WANT MY SKIN BACK!" screamed Draco, pushing her back before lunging at his body.

"Buddy!" said the brainless Draco happily before Mecha-Draco plowed into him.

"Yes, I think putting your mind back where it belongs is a lot more technical," said Chip, "Not to mention the way you're doing it right now will most likely kill it."

"Shut up, Chip! I don't want to be a robot!" snapped Draco before pausing as he realized what he'd said.

"Don't lose your head. There's bound to be a way to reverse this as long as we keep both halves of you intact," said Chip, "Now we have to figure out where those gnomes hid that bomb before it goes off."

"I know where it is," said Mecha Draco desperately before being spoken over by his body. "Me told you where it was...on dwarf boss's seat."

"Wait, as in the dwarf king's throne?" asked Chris.

"And you thought it involved a commode," said Techo.

"We gotta get to that throne," snapped Chloe.

The group ran for the tunnel when Dune Runner drove out with Hiccup and Astrid sitting inside. Unfortunately, this caused pretty much everyone to hit the dune buggy and get knocked aside. "Oops...sorry, mon," said Dune Runner.

...

The kids' dragons had been surprisingly easy to grab, the guards having all left. Matt however couldn't help but notice. "Draco, would you know where Kala is?" asked Matt.

"Not really," said Draco, "The gnomes talked more about their plans

than their prisoners."

Matt glared before lunging, the dragon golem fresh in his head.
"Where?" he snapped.

"I don't know, have you tried looked around in the tunnels?" asked Draco.

Matt snarled before throwing Draco aside and yelling, KALA!" only for a cannonball to explode at his feet. Matt was knocked backwards into a wall. Once his head stopped ringing and spinning, he said, "Ok, where's the cannon I'm gonna have to destroy now?"

On cue, the same mechanical Night Fury from earlier landed, the shoulder cannon folding away. "Oh, it's you again. I don't have time for you imitations automatons," said Matt. The machine just growled before lunging at Matt.

"Seems to have more personality than a clockwork golem ought to have," said Astrid.

"It's trying to eat me!" snapped Matt, holding the golem's jaws back barely.

"I got it," said Dune Runner grabbing the golem and lifting it up. The golem snarled angrily, trying to get loose before going still as it seemed to realize it wasn't getting loose for a bit.

"Do the gnomes make dragon golems very often?" asked Hiccup, "This one seems to act just like a dragon would."

Matt glared before peering closely at the golem. "Looks a little like Kala...but that's nuts," he said, a little desperately.

"Yeah, I mean, if Kala were in there, we would have found her real body by now," said Astrid.

"Yeah, she'd be...over...there...eating that rock," said Chloe.

"That's rather specific. Why'd you...ooooohâ€|" said Chris, spotting Kala's body happily chewing on some gravel.

"Save some for me," said Draco before wandering over and helping himself to some crunchy stone. Matt was staring before back at the golem who cocked its head...before he started screaming hysterically.

"So, was that attacking earlier because she was being controlled by gnomes or is it more anger at Matt?" asked NegaMorph.

"Probably both," said Chris.

"So how are we supposed to keep those two empty vessels out of trouble?" asked Chip. "We'll need a distraction to get to the dwarf king. We let them loose," said Techo, causing Matt to tackle him.

...

Believe or not, word about the Rokat clan's potential treason hadn't traveled up the command chain very far. So the dwarf king wasn't suspecting a thing when the Rokat clan arrived with a new throne. "Ok, Ruggedo, I've heard alot of...troubling rumors about the Rokat clan. In particular their views on our races' alliance," said the dwarf king softly, looking at the gnome clan leader.

"Oh, other clans are jealous of our natural brilliance and are prone to spread false rumors about us," said Ruggedo.

"O'course they are, alot of ye devices look especially similar to theirs," said the king calmly, causing Ruggedo to glare.

"But we have built devices which are like nothing the other clans could have ever have imagined," said Ruggedo.

"That beings me tae another rumor. Me associates tell me that ye still have a soul transference machine and soul golems," said the king calmly, smirking as Ruggedo yelled "LIES! FILTHY DWARVEN LIES!"

"Be that as it may, I think it's time we inspected your clan's caves, again," said the king, "Ye have until tomorrow."

Ruggedo grinned at that and said, "Of course, my king. Enjoy the throne. I'm sure you'll get a blast from it."

The dwarf king gave the gnomes an odd look as they left the throne room quickly, "Such an odd bunch. I can see why the other gnome clans say they aren't even remotely related to them."

...

"I'm telling you, you're all gonna die if we aren't allowed in!" yelled Matt at the guard to the dwarf king's tunnels.

"Spin me a new one. Everyone thinks their problem is one of epic proportions," said the guard.

"How does atomic fire sound?" snapped Matt.

"That anything like cosmic fire?" asked the other dwarf.

"Probably...NOW LET US IN!" snapped Matt, wincing as Draco's body yelled "BEFORE THE CAKE LIES TO US ALL!"

"And what's with the brainless dragons anyways?" asked the first guard.

"You have no idea how accurate that statement is," said Chloe.

"Still can't let ye in," said the first guard.

Matt sighed at that "We tried...DRACO, KALA, THOSE GUYS HAVE COCONUT CAKE IN THEIR POCKETS!"

"CAKE!" yelled Draco with Kala apparently roaring the same thing before they both tackled the dwarves. Matt and the others watched

before walking past. "Ok, spread out. These warheads are pretty small..." called Matt, glaring as several guards ran into view.

"OI! WHO ARE YA?" snapped one of them, readying a battleaxe.

"The bomb squad, here to prevent an assassination and genocide," said Matt, not expecting any of them to believe him.

The dwarves paused before Ruggedo walked into view on his 'chair' humming before spotting them. "ASSASSINS!" he called before exiting stage left.

"Ah smeg," grumbled Matt, knowing what was coming next.

The dwarves charged the gang at that while Mecha-Draco and Mecha-Kala headed for Ruggedo. "Ok, you can turn us back or Kala swallows you, peewee!" snapped Draco.

"I've got a better option to choose," said Ruggedo before pressing a button that allowed a compartment in the 'chair' to open, allowing him to reach inside and pull out a control rod.

"Oh no, KALA GRAB THE...uuunnnngh!" began Draco before he and Kala winced as the rod kicked in.

"I'd hate to waste such potentially useful golems, but I doubt those stupid dwarves will keep those annoyingly persistent Midgardians at bay for long. So go and even the odds," said Ruggedo.

...

Most of the dwarves were out of the fight, Matt knocking the last one out. "Ok...they pay these guys too much," he said, blasting the throne room doors...and ducking as a throwing axe shot past him and hit NegaMorph.

"So...think I'm some kinda pushover, eh?" yelled the king.

Matt looked over to see a dwarf that was somewhat taller the others. Not very taller, still shorter than the kids, but tall for a dwarf. And judging from the gold-decorated armor and the helmet with a crown-like engraving around it, he assumed this was the dwarf king. But something seemed a little unusual about this king.

"Ok, ye overgrown scunners. I'll tear ye's apart!" snapped the dwarf king, before Astrid yelled "SHUT UP!" causing everyone to pause from shock. "Look, I've been sent wandering through tunnels, been ambushed by gnomes armed from everything from a blaster-thing to a big club, I've had to deal with both a mopey frost giant and some weird metal giant, I don't want this day to be any harder just because a bunch of a rock-headed dwarves won't listen to me!" she snapped.

"Wow...first time null freak out," muttered Matt before a growling got their attention, everyone turning to see their golem friends snarling with a laughing Ruggedo.

"You Midgardians may be slow-witted, but you are definitely the most entertaining races in the Nine Realms. Maybe once I've seized control of Nidavillir, I'll take over Midgard just so I can have plenty of mortal to keep me entertained," said Ruggedo.

"Ruggedo, what the hel is the meanin' of this?" snapped the king.

"This is revenge. I don't care if I go with you...as long as you're gone. KILL THEM, MY GOLEMS!" Ruggedo snapped.

Matt had time to yell to Hiccup and the kids, "Get that bomb!" before Kala tackled him.

Hiccup manage to go around the battle and started heading for the door the dwarf king came out of, assuming that might lead to the throne room. However, a gnome warrior appeared in front of him and said, "Going somewhere?"

"Yeah, past you," said Hiccup before kicking him with his metal leg. The gnome was sent flying more easily than Hiccup anticipated.

The gnome however got up fast, aiming a rifle before a snarl caused him to turn and see Toothless. "Eheh...no harm done," he said nervously, dropping the rifle before running for it. Toothless snorted, sending a low level blast into the gnome's butt before following Hiccup in.

Hiccup had an idea where the bomb was and was trying to overturn the throne. Unfortunately, the throne was a bit too heavy for him. "Need a hand there?" Hiccup turned to see Snotlout and the twins. "Shouldn't you be fighting gnomes?" asked Hiccup.

"Chris said you might need back up," said Snotlout, "Now how about letting someone with real muscles move that thing?"

With their help, it was easier to overturn the throne to reveal a hidden compartment holding a cone shaped device. "Think that's it?" asked Ruffnut before a hatch opened and a speaker folded out with a LED countdown.

A male voice came from the speaker, "You are currently looking at a small nuclear bomb. If you have never heard of the term 'nuclear' or 'bomb', that means that this device will go boom in a very big way and destroy everything within a mile or at least make it uninhabitable. However, we have provided an opportunity to avert this disaster and save your lives. Just answer the following riddle before time runs out: By day, they are stolen. By night, they are returned." The kids looked at each other before a countdown appeared. "You now have 1 minute to answer correctly. Thank you for using A.T.M Munitions for your impending irradiation. Have a pleasant remaining 45 seconds," said the bomb calmly.

Immediately, they started firing off answers. "Dew?" asked Ruffnut.

"The tide?" asked Snotlout.

"Chickens?" asked Tuffnut, getting an odd look from Snotlout, "What? We bring them back, eventually."

"Negative...please proceed to your nearest medic as it seems your cerebral systems have short circuited," said the bomb. Snotlout and the twins immediately started shouting out things that they've stolen

and returned in hopes of a right answer. The twins' list was pretty long. "Immediate silence," said the bomb, the countdown now at 20 seconds, a rising hum beginning.

The others were now babbling and Hiccup, who had been trying to think, suddenly snapped, "Will you be quiet? I can't hear my own thoughts." The stunned silence was enough to let Hiccup focus and he concentrated on the riddle. "Disappears in the day, appears at night, night..." muttered Hiccup before suddenly thinking of the night sky and the answer. "The stars!" he proclaimed.

There was a pause before the bomb said, "Access code granted...DNA scan commencing to confirm human status." A light shot out at that, the countdown still ticking down before it stopped at 2 seconds. "Shutdown request granted...this device is now disarmed."

The kids let off a sigh of relief. "Well, looks like the worst is over," said Hiccup. He was about to pick up the bomb when suddenly a golden blur flew over their heads. They looked up to see Contrinus hit the wall, looking rather battered and a good hand of her wing feathers plucked out.

The kids turned to see a dozen or so of Ruggedo's gnomes charging in and wished that Dune Runner hadn't stayed behind with Fenris to make sure the device was fixed. Ruggedo himself soon entered the room, looking annoyed. "I suppose I'll have to start the bomb again," he said in an irritated tone, "But first, let's make sure these whelps won't turn it off again."

There was a buzzing at that and the countdown reset to 2 minutes. "Danger...100% chance of technology bleed to unregistered race. Shutdown overridden. Detonation in 2 minutes. This cannot be countermanded."

Ruggedo's irritation was replaced by worry. "Well, I suppose we don't need to be staying around here now," he said, "Better get to a safe distance."

"You're not going anywhere," said Hiccup, "Not until this countdown is stopped."

Ruggedo turned to look before he laughed, "Oh please, you haven't got one thing that can stop me."

Then Hiccup remembered something and reached into one of the bags that Fenris had given him. "Hey, is that my lunchbag?" asked Tuffnut.

"Yes and I hope there's something good in it," said Hiccup before pulling out a round white object.

Surprisingly, all the gnomes suddenly jumped out and starting yelling "EGG! EGG!" the same way some people would yell 'SNAKE!' Even Ruggedo was spooked. "Put that down!" he yelled, "Don't you know that eggs are poison?!"

The twins looked at each other at that, puzzled by the reaction before Ruffnut took out an egg too and said, "I don't see anything deadly about it...except the smell."

"Of course you simple humans wouldn't understand!" snapped Ruggedo, "Birds are creatures of the air and don't live in our earthy realm. They have no place here and their eggs are rank poison!"

"Oh really?" said a half dazed and all angry voice, its owner Contrinus, popping off the wall and advancing on the shocked gnomes as the bomb said "Detonation in 90 seconds."

Hiccup decided now was a good time to see how effective eggs really were on these guys. He threw the egg at one of the gnomes and it hit his face, splattering its contents on impact. The gnome screamed before his face swelled up and turned bright red. "My fathe..." lisped the gnome in agony.

"You didn't cook your eggs for lunch?" asked Snotlout dubiously.

"I knew we forgot to do something," said Tuffnut.

The twins grinned before grabbing eggs and pelting the gnomes till they ran for it. "Thoo hathe noth theen the lasth ofth me!" yelled Ruggedo before fleeing.

Matt immediately ran up to the bomb. "Override 3232 Delta!" he called.

The bomb beeped before saying "Code accepted...commencing DNA clarification...denied...human DNA not 100%."

"Smeg!" snapped Matt before grabbing Hiccup and making him face the bomb, "You say it!"

"Uh...Override 3232..." started Hiccup.

"Delta," muttered Matt.

"Delta," repeated Hiccup.

"Unable to comply...warhead now at critical mass...full evacuation required," said the bomb, the humming now more of a whine. Just then, Mecha-Kala barged her way into the room, looking a bit dented from the fight. She looked one look at the bomb before grabbing it with her mouth and running back out.

"KALA, GET BACK HERE WITH THAT NUKE!" snapped Matt as Kala flew round the corner and out in to the sky, shooting straight up. Kala didn't stop as she flew as fast as she could. The clockwork body she was in was able to match her normal body pretty well. Perhaps a bit better since she didn't feel tired.

"Detonation in 15...14...13...12...11..." exclaimed the bomb calmly, Kala looking down before she heaved as hard as she could and threw it skywards as hard as she could before turning into a dive. 10 seconds later, the sky behind her seemed to be set on fire as the bomb detonated.

While the actual explosion might have been possible to avoid, the shockwave it gave off was not. It hit Kala and sent her spiraling downwards. A new problem with this body is that regaining equilibrium wasn't a natural reflex now. All she could do was hold on as the ground headed up to meet her and everything went black.

...

When her oblivion started to end, one of the first things that Kala noticed was the throbbing everywhere between her scalp and her neck. _"Uuuuungnâ€|"_ she thought, getting up and stretching to see her own limb. She was so relieved by this she didn't mind that it was still a Night Fury's limb.

"Easy, lass. Don't move. Ye've been blown up," said a voice by her ear.

"Tell me something I don't know," grumbled Kala.

A commotion outside ended with a guard flying in and Matt stomping in. "Kala...speak to me," he exclaimed without thinking. Kala just gave him the best 'are you kidding' look a Night Fury could give. "Please...say som..." began Matt only to be hit by an ice blast from the next bed over.

"Some experiments have a headache," groaned Draco.

"Ye'd best leave the patients alone," said the dwarf doctor, "They're suffering from severe headaches and stomach cramps. Been eating some things they shouldn't have I wager."

Draco groaned, "Oh please, what could I have eaten that would..."

His stomach disagreed with him at that, making him belch loudly and causing him to disgorge a disgusted-looking NegaMorph. "That...was dreadful," shuddered NegaMorph, before staggering out the door.

Kala sighed, happy that she hadn't done anything before she barfed out Mac, who yelled "YAY! I'S WANNA GET ET!" before he tried to dive back down her throat.

However, Mac's attempted entry was blocked by PlasMorph being expelled. "That took longer than usual," commented Morph.

...

For the gang however, they were being given a royal thanks. The King had been pretty happy to thank the group that had saved his capital from being reduced to dust. It sure was a pleasant change from the thanks they've usually gotten. The gold they've been decorated didn't hurt either. "So much money," said Matt, shaking a bit from the frost still on him courtesy of Draco, who was sitting next to Contrinus.

Techo looked at it before biting a piece. "It's pure. I don't think there's a caret number for how pure this is," he said weakly, grinning like a loon.

Chip sighed and said, "I don't think I can understand how you can be so wrapped up with this." He turned to Chloe who had similar dollar-eyed look and asked, "You're not planning on sleeping on it, are you?"

"Gold's a soft metal...everyone knows that," said Chloe

distantly.

Chip just shook his head before turning back towards Billy, who has also been recognized for his help in defeating the gnomes. "Think this will be enough to make your folk proud?" he asked.

"It might...but we don't really like gnomes," said Billy.

"Going toe to toe with the gnome king ought to help," said Chip, "Not to mention the swag you're bringing back."

Billy nodded, holding up the sack of gold and devices he'd been allowed to take. "I hope this reward ceremony won't last too long," said Billy, "Because if I'm away from home too long, my grandma's going to make my butt look at that guy's face." He pointed at some of the gnomes that had been captured and their faces were still swollen from the 'egg poisoning'. Then he glanced back towards Dune Runner and said, "You think I could get that guy over there to fight me? You know, just a short duel so that they'll know I'm a capable fighter."

"You sure? I mean, he's pretty heavily armed, he's got four of them," said Chip carefully.

"Well, maybe just arm-wrestle him," said Billy.

...

"Ya wanna fight me?" said Dune Runner in a deadpan voice.

"You know, just a little sparring," said Billy, "Mostly wrestling."

"Well...if ya sure," said Dune Runner carefully, before he unfolded his weapon systems.

...

Krimm had noticed his son was missing for quite some time now and he was starting to get anxious. He might have done something incredibly foolish just to prove his manhood. So he was rather relieved when he received word from the dwarves that his son was in their realm. Though why he went there, he couldn't guess. Still, he headed through the gate to Nidavillir as quickly as he could.

All he had to do was get to the door before "KRIIIIIIM! Where are you going at this time?" shrilled a voice that literally caused cracks to appear all over Krimm.

"Just out for a bit, mother." he called with a cringe.

"Have you found Billinigr yet?" snapped the elderly frost giantess the voice belonged to.

"Not yet, mother. I'm sure he's just training," said Krimm with a wince before entertaining the usual calming image for dealing with his mother, an incident involving a Midgardian device called an ice pick.

"Do you think you can lie to your own mother?" snapped the frost

giantess before grabbing him by the ear. Krimm winced with pain. His mother's grip had acquired quite a reputation, particularly when it came to grasping ears. She wasn't called 'Earfreezer' for nothing.

"Mother...please!" winced Krimm before she said "You are going to take me to where that poor dear, Billinr is...NOW!" causing Krimm to wince again.

"Think of the icepick," he thought desperately,

...

When the two frost giants arrived in Vidanillir, it didn't take them too long to find Billinr. Their first clue was the sound of his screaming. "Billy? BILLY! I'M COMING DEAR!" screamed the grandmother, trampling the surprised gate guards and leaving Krimm just facepalming. She soon found him trying to avoid attacks from a four-armed metal brute who blasting missiles at him. "HEY YOU! STOP PICKING ON MY GRANDSON, YOU METAL MONSTER!" she screamed, running down.

The golem paused and looked at the oncoming frost giantess. "Ok, didn't see dis comin'," he said.

"Grandmother? What are you doing here?" groaned Billy, the grandson sixth sense hereditary to all lifeforms causing him to sense incoming embarrassment.

"We've come to take you back home," said his grandmother, "Ymir knows what trouble you've been getting into."

"He was kinda fightin' me ta prove his worth as a warrior...or something like that," said Dune Runner, a little confused.

"I told you I only wanted to wrestle!" yelled Billy, "I didn't want you to try to blow me up!"

"Dat is how we wrestle," said Dune Runner before he was sent flying by a right hook from 'gran'. "Ok, I might have deserved that," groaned Dune Runner.

A dwarf ran in at that, to everyone's surprise. "King...we got a problem..." he began before freezing solid as another, tired looking ice giant walked in.

"I told you, I'm NOT INVADING!" he snapped, adding with an equal yell "YOU NEED MORE THEN TWO FOR A FEL-DAMNED INVASION!"

"And you!" snapped Billy's grandma, focusing her wrath on her son, "You were the one filling poor Billy's head with delusions of grandeur and pressuring him to be something he's not. He could have been killed because you made him feel he wasn't worthy!"

"I was just trying to get him to concentrate on his training a little more," said the newcomer, backing up a little and ignoring the laughter coming from Matt and co.

"If it makes ya feel any better, Billy helped save the dwarves and fought de gnome king," said Dune Runner.

Billy's gran laughed at that, "You beat up the king of the shrimps?"

"Well, I managed to swat a swathe through his army and almost froze his mech," said Billy.

Billy's gran laughed out loud at that. "That's my boy, the warrior in training," she said before screaming "SILENCE!" at Krimm as he began to say "Isn't that what you told me not to say to him?"

"And he didn't do too bad a job since he got some booty from de dwarf king," said Dune Runner.

"Oh, you make me so proud. Let's go home and get you something nice," said the gran before yelling "KRIMM, WE'RE LEAVING! GET YOUR ICY BUTT IN GEAR!"

"I'm coming, I'm coming," grumbled Krimm.

The others just stared at that before Matt finally summed the thoughts up with "Well...that just happened...very weirdly."

"I suppose some families can weird like that," said Chip, "But who are we to judge on that?"

"Yeah, just look at us," muttered Chloe.

"Anyways, we should be returning," said Fenris, "The dwarf king and I have negotiated about your contract and she was gracious enough to reduce the final cost."

"Yeah I'm...wait...it was a she?" said Matt.

"Of course she was," said Fenris, "Didn't you notice the shape of her breastplate?"

"Not really, don't usually bother to look there when the face has a badger you can hide an assault rifle in," said Matt.

"All dwarves grow beards, regardless of their gender," said Fenris, "I've heard that growing facial hair is the first sign that they're leaving childhood."

"That is just...too weird...can we leave beard land?" said Matt, his eye twitching as his brain began to come unglued.

"Certainly," said Fenris, "Whenever you're ready to leave."

"Well, we should double check, make sure the gnomes don't have any other fun toys, but apart from that," said Techo.

"I don't suppose I'll be able to get REAL dwarves to help with the ship," said Chip.

Everyone turned to glare at Chip at that before yelling "NO!"

"I expected that answer, just wanted to confirm it," said Chip.

"Ok, that's good, so you can work on ALL the software!" snapped

Matt.

"I have been," said Chip, "Who do you think has been pulling most of the weight regarding the restoration?"

"Then you can work on ALL of it!" snapped Matt.

"Matt, I can't manage all of the hardware on my own. I don't have nearly enough muscle to remove all the ice and move the heavier machinery," said Chip.

"Then learn!" snapped Matt.

Chip groaned and muttered, "It's always one step forward and two steps back, why do I bother putting effort into it?"

* * *

><p>There's another chapter and it was a bit late again. I think I'm going to change the update schedule so that it'll be once every two weeks. Anyways, we've had frost giants, we've had dwarves and gnomes, and Dune Runner's finally shown up after being stranded on the moon back in the first chapter. Might take a while to get to the other guys up there. Also, there have been at least three references to Ozma of Oz from L. Frank Baum's Oz books. Hopefully they've actually been noticed or, at the very least, readers have actually heard about it. Anyways, next chapter will be up in two weeks and let's see if we can keep the schedule smooth with that. Please review.<p>

14. An Enchantress's Scorn

****Voyagers Saga****

****Broken Nest****

****Chapter 14: An Enchantress's Scorn****

On a small island in the southernmost part of the archipelago, a dragon was trying to rest after a very long flight. Dragons are known to migrate over hundreds of miles yearly. But this was no simple migration, this was a quest for revenge.

"Just a little further...just a little further..." she hissed darkly, glaring down at the next island on the horizon. She had found out that some spells worked, like scrying which had proven very useful in finding out where the cause of her anguish was. It had been a very, very long chase, but she was finally getting close. Flying across the vast miles of ocean wasn't easy, but it will definitely be worth it once she gets there.

"Oh, how I'll make you scream," she growled to herself as she padded over to a cave. She paused as she heard two voices inside. "Another pack of wild dragons," she grumbled, "Does every single type of dragon have to be so fiercely territorial?"

She padded into the cave smugly, muttering the start of one of the other spells she knew, a fun little incineration spell. It seemed her new form had really boosted her elemental magic. _"So then the eel...hey, who are you?"_ said on the two Nadders inside the

cave.

"The new landlord and I'm using this cave so get out or be roasted," said Circe.

"This is a Nadder only cave, whatever you are," sneered the other, a female, saying, "Me and my brother own this cave."

"Too bad, I'm look for a place to spend the night and I'd rather not spend most of it fighting for a good cave," said Circe, "But I know one word that can make you."

"And what's that?" asked the male Nadder.

"In igne furoris," said Circe calmly, raising her paw and causing the two orbs floating there to shoot out and hit the Nadders, incinerating them to ash in seconds. "Fireballs, so useful," said Circe calmly. She walked in and curled up. "And it makes the floor all nice and toasty too," she said.

...

Astrid, however, wasn't asleep, peering around the side of a half-smashed wall. "Ok, I can handle this. I train a Deadly Nadder and I have wolf powers. This should be easy," she said to herself.

She jumped out of cover just as a disembodied voice called out, "Stage one training commencing...non-com's clear the deck," several hatches opening to let in several six legged metallic creatures the size of German shepherds.

"Alright, just think of them as extra-large bugs to squish," said Astrid as she readied her axe.

A laser blast blew a chunk out the wall at her, two of the three metal machines splitting off to surround her before Fenris's voice echoed, "Come on, cub. These machines are nothing to us."

"What do you mean 'us'? I'm the one who's actually fighting them!" snapped Astrid. A laser blast hit her in the back at that, causing a body wide burning pain. "You can shake that off. That was only a little poke compared to what fire demons can do," said Fenris's voice.

"Fire demons?" snapped Astrid before another, higher powered blast blew out a wall.

"You always have to be prepared for any kind of enemy," said Fenris.

Astrid glared, shifting to wolf warrior form before lunging at one of the drones, ignoring the blasts that now felt like pinpricks now

She closed in on a drone and hacked its head off. "There we go. Now you're getting into it," said Fenris.

The other two drones continued firing, Astrid turning and plunging her axe into one before pulling it out and slashing through the third. "Calibration complete," said the first voice at that.

...

"I tell you, I'm glad me and Chloe came after flash training was invented. That panic room almost killed me," said Matt, he and Chris walking down the corridor of what Matt had named, via a sign on the surface next to the emergency hatch, 'Ice Station Sucks' before anyone could stop him.

"Personally, I don't mind a little sparring," said Chris, "Not everyone can win their fights by just flicking their hands."

"Yeah...would you want to die? Warden says the safety subroutines are fried," said Matt sternly before both his and Chris's wrist-comps beeped, Chris glaring at Matt's Atlantean one, the one he had stolen during the run in with Taleth. Matt looked at his and said, "That can't be right. It says that someone's using the panic room. I quite specifically ordered that room off limits." The two looked at each other before breaking into a run.

...

"Fenris, isn't it finished?" called Astrid before the panic room VI said "Test level now prepared...alert...safeties disabled. Commencing..." before a heavy turret popped out, rotating to aim at her.

Astrid yelped and quickly dove out of the way before it fired. "FENRIS, I DON'T NEED THIS KIND OF TRAINING!" yelled Astrid. She turned to look at the crater the cannon had caused before several more turrets popped out of hidden alcoves, opening fire. Astrid ran to avoid becoming obliterated. "FENRIS, TURN IT OFF!" she yelled.

Fenris could be heard yelling "Turn this confounded contraption off." though nothing was heard, except for the turrets to start firing rapid-fire bursts. This wasn't much better for Astrid as the bursts would perforate her if they hit her.

She paused as one turret popped out, aimed...and paused. Astrid allowed herself a sigh of relief. Apparently, Fenris had managed to shut the mad machine off.

On cue something kicked her in the chest hard enough to dent her transformed self's armor and send her flying back a good ten feet. A humanoid, a metallic man with only a smooth orb with a single red line for a face shimmered into view, its leg outstretched in a kick

Astrid winced in pain and said, "Now what?"

The machine made no comment, a sword extending from its left arm as it strode purposely towards her. Astrid got back up and said, "Ok, that thing wants to find me hand-to-hand, that can't be worse than the cannons."

The bot leapt forward at that, aiming a decapitating blow. Astrid yelped and quickly moved out the way. "I take it back, it's just as bad as the cannons," she said. The bot made no comment, aiming

another slash that caused its blade to get jammed in the wall. Astrid didn't waste the opportunity and quickly slashed at it with her axe.

The droid staggered back, minus its blade arm below the elbow before regarding Astrid critically...and letting a second blade extend from its other arm. "Oh come on!" snapped Astrid. The bot paused as a second one landed behind Astrid, grabbing her axe and trying to pull it free. "Hey, that's not fair!" yelled Astrid as she tried to pull her axe back.

The bots 'reply' was to send her flying with a backhand blow, both bots advancing on her...before a hail of gunfire hit one of them. Astrid looked up to see Matt and several of his men shooting down the droids. "Thank Odin," sighed Astrid.

"Program breach...commencing shutdown," said the panic room computer as the last bot staggered and fell from the weapon fire.

Matt went over to Astrid and asked, "Are you alright?"

"I'm fine...you train in this?" said Astrid icily.

"No, we have the training shoehorned into our brains painfully," said Matt casually before glaring at where the observation room was, "Astrid, why don't you take a long rest. I'd like to have a chat with your tutor."

He didn't wait for a reply, simply stomping out, into the observation room and grabbing Fenris, ignoring the fact for the moment that Fenris was outside his weight class power-wise. "What the hell was going through that head of yours?" he snapped.

"I was having her go through a basic training course," said Fenris, "How was I supposed to know your facility was so faulty?"

"There's a reason this room's locked. YOU NEARLY KILLED HER!" snapped Matt.

"Well you didn't make that reason clear enough," said Fenris.

"I think the sign was proof enough...the sign saying 'keep put'?" snapped Matt

"I thought that was for the non-combative members of your crew," said Fenris.

"OF COURSE IT WASN'T! She's lucky to be alive, second degree laser burns for a start. God knows what the medicomp will find once we get her to sickbay," snapped Matt.

"I didn't mean to put her in such danger," said Fenris, "I wouldn't have thought that your training room would be actively trying to kill her."

"For the last time, It was sealed for a damn reason," growled Matt

"And you failed to clarify that reason properly," said Fenris.

"When a door is sealed on this base, it is sealed for a reason. If you fail to get that once more, I will throw you back in that freezer we found you in," growled Matt

Fenris glared and said, "You don't have the power to do that."

"I am sure I could convince the spiderbots to kill you in your sleep. I get the feeling they could manage that," said Matt darkly, the lights flickering.

Just then, NegaMorph came in and asked, "What's with all the ruckus?"

"Wolf boy here nearly got Astrid killed in the panic room." snapped Matt.

"Oh, did he get the message?" asked NegaMorph.

"The door was sealed. I sealed it myself," snapped Matt.

"Not very well, obviously, but has Fenris got the message about obeying notices?" asked NegaMorph.

"He's a guest in OUR base," snapped Matt, Fenris snarling "And he is standing right here."

"If you ask me, I think he needs to spend some time outside this base to really think about what he's done," said NegaMorph. Fenris bared his fangs at that before burying his sword in NegaMorph's head.

"Come to think of it, that's not a bad idea," said Matt.

NegaMorph pulled the sword out of his head and said, "And I know just the place he should stay."

Fenris sneered. "I am a warrior of Asgard. There is no way you can make me go anywhere I do not wish."

Matt looked thoughtful before saying, "You've got a point there. We can't but..." He clicked on the comm and said, "Chloe, can you come to the panic room please?"

...

A short time later...

Fenris crouched in the doghouse that had built on the other side of the iceberg and grumbled, "No fair using his sister's wrath against me."

NegaMorph, unable to resist rubbing it in, said, "She does make a good argument...and failing that a nasty tazer."

"Why would you even build a doghouse here in the first place?" asked Fenris.

"Well, I kinda built it for someone else in mind," said NegaMorph.

Fenris looked to his side to see a sign with Matt's name on it. "It's for when Kala's cured," said NegaMorph helpfully before the two heard the sound of wings.

"Would that be her?" asked Fenris.

"I think her wingbeat's softer than that," said NegaMorph. The duo ducked back as an unknown dragoness landed, muttering darkly...in Greek of all things. "A talking dragon? That's not normal around here," muttered NegaMorph.

"You know, there's something about that voice that's familiar, but I can't quite place it," said Fenris.

"When I get my talons on that Viking, she is going to pay. Nobody does this to me on my own island," said the dragoness darkly.

"Ok, that definitely rings a bell," said NegaMorph, "I think that dragon might be Circe, but you wouldn't know who that is, would you?"

"No, she was a healer on Asgard. She was...unwell even then," said Fenris darkly.

"Let me guess, she got kicked down to Midgard for unethical practices?" asked NegaMorph.

"She was banished, yes," said Fenris.

"Well, she's not a quitter if she followed us all the way here," said NegaMorph.

"Then it seems we should make her leave," said Fenris calmly.

Fenris took a deep breath to challenge Circe, but he was cut off with a choked yelp but NegaMorph yanking his chain. "No...if she sees us, she'll roast us," hissed NegaMorph

Fenris tugged at the collar around his neck and asked, "Why do I have to wear this thing? It's demeaning."

"Uh, yeah, that's the whole point," said NegaMorph, "Come on. Let's tell Matt. In his mood, he needs to vent."

...

Circe looked around before double-checking her scrying spell. For some reason it had sent her to this overgrown iceberg. Nothing lived here. "I'd say they were clever to find a way to misdirect my scrying spell, but I'm certain they don't have the magical aptitude to turn milk into cream," said Circe.

A clacking noise got her attention at that, causing her to turn to see several metal spiders emerging from a hole in the snow that definitely hadn't been there before. Circe growled before spitting fire at them. She had gotten quite proficient with that over the last few weeks.

The flame washed over the spiders before vanishing to show all it had done was make the spiders glow...oh and make them seem amused judging

from the rather chilling high-pitched laughter coming from them.

Circe cast a lightning spell at them next, hoping they would shatter from its power. The spider machines just laughed even more before one of them leapt at Circe's face with a high pitched 'wheeeee' Circe shook her head to dislodge the creature, but it had a very sure grip.

The rest also jumped at her, causing her to step back, roaring angrily before to her surprise, one of them sprayed something on her face. Circe coughed at whatever it was stung her eyes and its noxious fumes assaulted her nostrils. The laughter came again before the bots jumped off, one holding a reflective surface in front of her.

The image wasn't quite flattering as the bots had painted most of her face white with ridiculously red lips and blue eye shadow that did not look dignified. And no female liked being given a bad makeover. The spiderbots scattered as she roared angrily again, one squeaking "RUN AWAAAY!" as they scuttled off laughing. Circe shot out fireballs everywhere after the spiderbots, not caring if the entire iceberg would melt.

What she didn't notice was several figures watching from cover. "Ok...so when do we shoot her?" asked a trooper.

"When she stops for breath, won't be able to get in a good taunt with her roaring so loudly," said Matt. After a few minutes Circle finally stopped, Matt grinning and hopping into view. "Hello...can we help you?" he called.

Circe turned towards him and snarled, "You..."

"Yup. So, Circe, you really fit that well," Matt called, grinning as Circe tried to spit a fireball to no effect, "I think you used up all your ammo."

"As much as I'd love to render you limb from limb, there's someone higher on my list of priorities to destroy," growled Circe, "Where is that girl?"

"What girl?" asked Matt mockingly.

"Where is the one called Astrid?" roared Circe before something kicked her in the side hard enough to knock her over.

"There she is," called Matt mockingly

Circe looked up in gaped in disbelief at the wolf girl standing above her. "A wolf warrior? Impossible! The stones have been hidden for centuries!" she exclaimed.

"Surprise!" laughed Matt.

"Circe, do you really have no life of your own anymore?" said Astrid, "I mean, coming all this way to get revenge on me like this? It's pathetic."

"You and that...freak there ruined everything," snarled Circe angrily, taking a swipe at her.

"As far as I'm concerned, we just happened to be the ones who brought what you had coming to you," said Astrid. Circle roared and lunged at Astrid who jumped it, causing Circe to faceplant into the snow.

"Sir, shouldn't be detaining her now?" asked a trooper.

"Oh, no, no, Astrid has this one covered," said Matt.

Astrid indeed had it covered, her dragon training coupled with her current condition making her impossible to while being able to hit back equally. Circe conjured another fireball to throw at Astrid, but it was already rather weak.

The return blow however wasn't, sending Circe off her feet and back into the snow. "I'd surrender if I were you," called Matt.

"I...will...have...my..." struggled Circe before another kick knocked her back down.

"Nap? Yes you will. Someone get this flying handbag off my base," said Matt, addressing the last part to the troopers.

"Where should we take her?" asked a trooper.

"Who cares? I'd say Dragon Island, but the dragons there don't deserve her. Any other remote island will do," said Matt.

...

Circe groaned, coming round as she heard a voice saying _"What kind of dragon is that? She's ugly."_ Circe slowly shook her head to see she was on a different island, one that was mostly bare rock and scorched trees.

"Hey, she's awake," said a second voice, Circe turning her head to see a Deadly Nadder and a Monstrous Nightmare staring at her.

"What are you looking at?" she snapped.

"Nothing...we just wanna know why some humans dumped you here," said the Deadly Nadder, the owner of the first voice apparently.

"They just dumped me here?" snapped Circe as she struggled to get up.

"Yeah...like an eel," said the Monstrous Nightmare.

"They dare to discard me like I'm sort of...commoner?!" she snapped.

"You know those humans?" asked the Nadder.

"Know them? They were the ones responsible for ruining my life!" snapped Circe.

"How'd they do that? Steal your fish?" said the Monstrous

Nightmare, he and the Nadder chuckling.

Circe spat a fireball at them and snapped, "I was the most powerful sorceress on this planet before they took everything from me!"

"What's a saucer ress?" asked the Nadder

Circe gave the two a disbelieving look before saying "Why am I bothering saying any of this to you? You look like you could barely hold a thought between you."

"Hey, I resent that," said the Monstrous Nightmare.

The Nadder added, _"Yeah, it's the other dragons who are idiots, actually making up with those overgrown apes."_

"Do tell," said Circe in an obviously uninterested way.

"Annoying guys, their runt helped that traitor Night Fury kill the queen," said the Monstrous Nightmare calmly, not spotting the danger signs.

"Runt with the Night Fury?" asked Circe, "He didn't happen to have a metal leg, did he?"

"Yeah, got it burned off," sneered the Nadder.

"Interesting," said Circe, actually meaning it this time, "And how many others feel the same way?"

"None, to be honest we were all happy to see that fat slob get blown up. But those humans killed alot of us. No way me and my friend were gonna play nice," said the Nadder.

"So just you two dragons hate the humans," said Circe.

"Yeah," said the two.

Circe sighed before muttering, "Well, I suppose it's better than starting with nothing. But I'll need a lot more than these two to defeat those off-worlders."

A echoing voice said "Help? Do I hear the great Circe asking for...help?" in an amused tone.

Circe spun around and demanded, "Who said that?!"

"Have you truly been on Midgard that long?" sneered the voice.

"It can't be. You're forbidden to be in this realm," said Circe.

"I'm not really here, but you are," said the voice, that of Hel's.

"And you seek to further your goals through me," said Circe.

"I want the new wolf warrior in my legion...and you wish revenge on her. I believe we have a mutual goal," said Hel calmly.

"Joining your legion, would that be a terrible fate that no mortal should justly suffer?" asked Circe.

"She will be rendered all but a empty shell...but there is a small part that can watch as she kills everything," said Hel.

"Perfect," said Circe, "Sounds like just the kind of revenge I'm looking for. Though I'll want to inflict suffering on those she knows for good measure."

"She will kill them, you do realize that, right?" said Hel.

"I see that, but I want their suffering to be worse than a quick death," said Circe.

"Who said anything about quick?" said Hel before sighing "Plus you do realize that the void walkers' masters would destroy you should you end them."

"From what little I've gleamed from them, he's a fugitive from his own government," said Circe.

"I did not speak of this 'NSC'," said Hel darkly, causing Circe to shudder uncontrollably.

"Fine, I won't end them, I'll inflict upon them a curse that will make them pine for death," said Circe.

"Oh, not all of them are covered by this, but at least two are out of bounds of any curse, unless you wish for a visit from...them," said Hel.

"Very well then, but first I need a better way of capturing that girl than just using what little magic I have left," said Circe.

"Maybe you need a little...pick me up?" said Hel's voice, some of the ice on the ground turning black and molding up into a bottle.

"What is this?" asked Circe.

"Something that will return you to your full power and more. Your original body is lost, but you will get the next best thing. There is enough for you and at least 4 others," said Hel calmly.

"4 others..." said Circe before glancing over at the Nadder and the Nightmare, which seemed to have frozen in that way things do when you're talking with a god, "Well, there's two at least."

"Beware...should you fail, you will get no aid from me or my followers," said Hel coldly

"I don't see how my life could be any lower than this," said Circe.

"Dragons are highly respected on some parts of Midgard," said Hel before a sigh was heard, "As you wish. Just remember, you chose this path."

The rest of the world seemed to unfreeze and the Nadder, _"What's an off-worlder?"_

"The only who's off around here is her," said the Nightmare.

Circe glared before smirking, "Hey, how would you like a chance to put the humans in their place?"

"And how are you going to pull that off?" asked the Nightmare.

"With a little gift, eat that," said Circe, carefully pouring some of the bottles contents onto some snow.

The Nadder sniffed it and said, _"It smells really ashy."_

"It should," muttered Circe before saying, "Do you want vengeance on the humans or not?"

The two dragons exchanged a glance before the Nightmare said, _"Anything's better than just living out here, right?"_ The Nadder nodded before eating the snow with one gulp

Circe poured some more and said, "Eat up." The Monstrous Nightmare looked confused before eating some too. Circe shrugged and sat back. "Now to see if its poisonous," she said.

The two dragons seemed shocked before they started gargling and black foam dripped from their mouths. Circe's eyes narrowed, thinking 'Nice try, Hel.' Then she noticed that black foam was not simply dripping but sliding down their necks and across their bodies. "What in the nine realms?" she muttered, doing the mental equivalent of eating popcorn as the goo formed a kind of cocoon that began to deform

The cocoons swelled up a bit before they started shriveling down and embrittle, making it a lot easier for the two dragons to start clawing their way out. What emerged could easily have passed for a Shar-Khan in hybrid form, albeit wearing this year's 'death knight' uniforms...oh and looking like they'd consumed an entire tanker of kr'ta.

"Well, well, this is certainly impressive," said Circe, "Tell me, where do your loyalties lie?"

The ex-Monstrous Nightmare said weakly "I think I'm gonna barf." before running past Circe and behind some rocks.

"Ah, so your minds have not been altered, that's good for me," said Circe before gripping the bottle.

"You want to drink that stuff after seeing what it did?" asked the ex-Deadly Nadder.

Circe snapped "Hel yes!" she snapped going derp eyed from idiocy exposure as she heard Hel's voice said "Pardon?" in her head.

"Er, it's just an expression of...never mind," said Circe, swigging down the potion before this lower dragon brain lost more of its higher functions. She twitched before everything went momentarily black.

...

Meanwhile, Chip was giving Matt a status report on the cruiser's repairs. "Look, the sooner we get out of here, the better. How long till its space worthy? We can handle the small stuff at a neutral port," snapped Matt.

"Well, it seems that our main obstacles are the ice incasing the ship itself and the power core," said Chip.

"Then turn Morph into a fire experiment and melt it," snapped Matt.

"Sure, if you want to sink to the bottom of the sea," said Chip, "In its current condition, the power core is only able to provide enough energy for us to run our equipment and such. It won't be able to take us up. We need to find some way of recharging it."

"Find a way, use Sparky or something. Morph can turn into any experiment, turn him into a version of you and brainstorm," said Matt annoyed.

"Morph's imitation of me is not quite as reliable as..." started Chip before noticing Matt's look and said, "I'll consider all our options."

"Good boy, now get to work...and no dwarves!" snapped Matt.

As soon as Chip left, Matt considered what to do next. He didn't really have anything to do and he wasn't quite in the mood for flying right now. So he decided he might as well boast to Fenris for a bit. He wandered out and oh joy, there was his target, trying to explain to Hiccup why Astrid would be late going back home.

"So you just let in there without checking if it was safe," said Hiccup, "That's the kind of recklessness I'd expect from Snotlout."

Snotlout nodded before looking annoyed, "Hey!"

Fenris simply bowed. "I cannot apologize enough. I have treated her safety without a hint of honor," he said.

"And your training wasn't even necessary in the first place," said Matt, "She took down Circe all on her own. Well, the spiderbots may have made her waste her shots, but Astrid totally handled her."

"She must learn..." began Fenris starting an automatic response.

Matt said, "I had a sign up there, learn to read."

Fenris sighed before saying, "So, what did you do with Circe after Astrid defeated her?"

"We dumped her on a random island," said Matt promptly.

"You just let her go?" asked Fenris disbelievingly.

"We're not into executing villains that are as dangerous and competent as a sandwich. This is a boring job. We need entertainment," said Matt, Fenris jumping as every passing merc nodded in agreement.

"That was extremely foolish," said Fenris, "You should have found some means of imprisoning her. Allowing an enemy to leave and let them plot revenge is a terrible mistake. Especially if that enemy is a mage, even more so if they are an enchantress, especially this enchantress. You void-walkers have an expression, Hel hath no fury like a woman scorned. Which personally never made sense to me since Hel is a woman herself."

"But then we'd have nobody to annoy," said Chris gloomily.

"I don't know about the rest of the villains you may face, but Circe is no one to trifle with. She once turned a man into a rat and he was nearly devoured by his own cat. And that was just for breaking up with her," said Fenris, "And she'll be much angrier with you than she was with him."

Matt grinned, "You need opposable thumbs for that kinda magic."

"Mark my words, Circe will make you rue taking her lightly," said Fenris.

"Of course she will," said Matt in a bored tone

Fenris sighed and said, "When she comes down upon you like the forces of Ragnarok, don't say I didn't warn you."

"We won't cause she won't," said Matt before pausing as everyone glared. "Oh yeah...fate," Matt muttered darkly.

"Well, I suppose we better get the defenses ready," said Chris.

"How soon before Astrid comes home?" asked Hiccup.

"A day and she'll be fit to come home," said Techo.

"We might even have that amulet loosened up," said Matt.

"That may not happen. It will at least be a day before we can attempt the ritual," said Fenris.

"What ritual?" asked Tuffnut.

Fenris sighed, "To allow Astrid to attempt to remove the amulet."

"Oh...what amulet again?" asked Tuffnut, causing almost everyone to smack their foreheads. The exception, of course, being Tuffnut's equally ignorant sister.

"The wolf amulet embedded in Astrid's chest?" said Matt, somehow managing not to explode.

"Oh, right. So why don't you just take it out?" asked Ruffnut.

"Cause it'd tear out her entire ribcage with it if we tried that," said Matt casually, Astrid whimpering at that.

"Cool..." said the twins.

"You know, I firmly believe that these two are the dimmest pair of sentient beings in this world," said Fenris.

Unknown to any of them, Morph was passing by when Fenris made his statement. "My position is in jeopardy?" asked Morph, "I must step up my game." He flipped himself over and started crawling off using his nose.

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Meanwhile...away from the current stupidity capital of Norway...

Circe looked down from a cliff at Berk. Her new minions, who she privately had named Dumb and Dumber, stood next to her.

She had to admit, this new form looked great on her. Like her minions, she had been transformed into a half human/half dragon state that capture all of her old beauty along with the physical fitness that eluded most magicians. Her armor has similar dark knight characteristics like her minions, but mostly had the flowing, drifting contours so partial to enchantresses. Her new form and outfit also came with a staff made of the same dark material with a roaring dragon's head on the top.

"Ok you two, snap to it. One of you, sink their longboats. And the other, destroy their armory. I do not want an axe in the face after I got one back," she snapped.

"Shall we roast the villagers while we're at it?" asked the Monstrous Nightmare that Circe privately called Dumber.

"No, I want hostages, not roasts," snapped Circe.

"Can we eat the sheep?" asked the Deadly Nadder that Circe privately called Dumb.

"Only a couple. We do not know how long we will be here," said Circe with a sigh, adding, "AFTER you help me take over though, not before."

The two dragons took off and flew towards the town. "As soon as I'm finished with this island and those allied to it, I suppose this would make a good place to build my new home on," said Circe, "And the best thing is that bitch has to come back here at some point."

The dragon head on her staff let out a greenish glow as an image form in its mouth. "Do not forget that bitch belongs to me," said Hel.

"Yes, yes," said Circe in a bored tone.

"Don't take that light a tone with me," said Hel, "You're bound to me

now. And things could be made a lot worse for you if you go against my will."

Circe was about to reply before to her horror, the staff came to life and bit her. "OK, OK, YOU'RE THE BOSS!" she screamed as it dug its fangs in.

"Good," said Hel before the staff let go, "Also, be careful with this staff. If you break it, our deal is broken as well. It may only be broken with your hands, but take care of it anyways."

"Yes, my lady," said Circe bitterly.

"Good, also, don't forget to keep an eye on those dragons you've altered. They seem like the kind that need supervision," said Hel before her image disappeared.

"Yeah...idiots that they are," Circe muttered, the sound of battle coming from below already. Circe spread her wings and took off for the village. "Let's see how powerful my magic is through this thing," she said as her staff head's eyes started glowing red.

â€

Hiccup and the others had been reluctant to leave Astrid and Stormfly behind but Matt was quite literally a living example of their medical expertise, given the fact he was walking and talking after Taleth had played naught and crosses on him. (Tic-tac-toe for those who aren't familiar with British terms.)

"I hope her parents won't mind Astrid being absent," said Hiccup.

"Eh, they'll probably think it's about time for her monthly foraging in the wilderness to prove she's tough enough to be worth keeping," said Snotlout. The others gave him somewhat baffled looks. "What? Doesn't everyone's parents do that?" asked Snotlout.

The others sighed, Kala, who had tagged along, looking over at Hookfang. _"You realize your buddies got the common sense and tact of a rock, right?"_ she asked.

"Blame his dad for cramming that little space in his head full of 'might makes right' junk," said Hookfang.

"I thought dragons thought that too," said Kala accusingly.

Hookfang's reply was, _"Yeah...but we have the excuse of evolution."_

Kala looked more than a little confused and she muttered to herself, _"Note to self: stop having philosophical conversations with wild dragons."_

The group rounded the rock pillars to see Berk straight ahead...or more precisely, a fogbank where it should have been.

"Unusually thick fog we're having today," said Hiccup.

"Uh, this doesn't mean draugr are attacking, does it?" asked Fishlegs nervously.

The group flew down through the fog, landing in the town square to find it was deserted, though the armoury was destroyed (again). "Think it was Alvin?" asked Snotlout.

"I'm not sure," said Hiccup, "We better start looking for answers."

The group headed out, their dragons and Kala glaring. The place stunk of what Kala called 'bad mojo'. And it wasn't draugr 'bad mojo'. It was something pretty nasty, but not rotten or smelling like brine.

Hiccup opened the door to his house, he and Toothless peering in. "Dad? You in here?" he called, Toothless sniffing the ground.

However, the house seemed completely deserted. The fire had died out in the fireplace and his father's mug had tipped over, spilling its contents onto the tabletop which appeared half-dried up. Toothless growled angrily at that, the evil smell now incredibly strong around that area. "Whatever happened, it must have happened in a hurry," said Hiccup as he knelt down to look for any clues on the floor.

A scrabbling was heard from upstairs at that, causing the duo to look up. "Think that was Dad?" asked Hiccup. Toothless gave a dismissive snort. "You're right. Dad isn't the kind to hide when there's trouble. But we better have a look anyways," said Hiccup.

With that, Hiccup headed for the stairs, slowly walking up them to see some...thing in his room.

"Who's there?" he demanded. The thing in the room looked like a musclebound humanoid boar wearing a Vikings clothing. It also looked pissed off. "Oookay, I wasn't expecting that," said Hiccup. The boar-man roared angrily and tried to charge, only to be knocked flying by a tail whip from Toothless.

"Toothless, I think we've seen enough to get a good idea of what's happened," said Hiccup, "We better find the others before they run into anything worse." A scream from outside was heard, the duo running out to bump into Snotlout. "Let me guess, you found a savage boarman," said Hiccup.

"Dragon lady!" yelled Snotlout seemingly randomly.

"You mean Chloe?" asked Hiccup.

"No...no..." said Snotlout ominously before a scrabbling was heard and a familiar voice said "Am I that forgetful, my pet?"

Hiccup froze and said, "Ok, I heard Circe was in the area, but I didn't think she'd attack Berk. I mean, one dragon can't take an entire village."

"Only part dragon at the moment...and with some new tricks," said Circe's voice, a humanoid figure visible through the fog on a rooftop.

"And I'm guessing you didn't just happen to stumble across those new tricks," said Hiccup.

"My new mistress, would you like to see?" said Circe coyly before the figure jumped down.

Hiccup and Snotlout looked up at the half-dragon enchantress in flattering armor. "You know, for a crazy witch, she doesn't look half bad," commented Snotlout.

"Thank you. For that, I won't turn you into a boar," said Circe happily.

"Oh, wait, she's that crazy witch," said Snotlout as he recalled the last time they met Circe.

"Indeed," said Circe, apparently not bothered by the insult as she leveled the head of her staff at Snotlout, the eyes on it glowing green.

"Uh, I just remembered. I left the kettle boiling," said Snotlout before turning and running.

Circe smirked, a blast of energy shooting out as she said, "So...your family thinks might is always right, do they?"

The blast hit Snotlout in the back and caused him to fall forward. As he was getting back up, his arms became longer, thicker, and a lot hairier. He turned around, revealing his face was almost exactly like that of a gorilla.

"Much better. Now then, grab my pet please," said Circe, addressing Snotlout. Snotlout grunted before starting towards Hiccup.

"You won't get away with this. Astrid and Fenris will find out about this," said Hiccup, he and Toothless backing up only to pale as Circe laughed and said "Good...let them"

Snotlout just grunted as he got closer. "Now, Snotlout, I know you're smarter than this," said Hiccup, "You don't really want to grab me, do you?" Snotlout scratched his armpit with a bored look on his face before noticing several barrels nearby. He picked one up and threw it at Hiccup.

Luckily, a green fireball incinerated it, a humanoid deadly Nadder landing. "Good shot, Dumb. This one is not to be harmed," said Circe.

"Dumb?" asked the Nadder in an offended tone.

"Well, I don't know your name," said Circe dryly before looking to see that Hiccup and Toothless had exited stage left, "I take it back, you are dumb. GET HIM!" Snotlout hooted loudly before picking up and throwing more barrels. "Oh, good grief," muttered Circe.

Just then, she spotted what was most likely Toothless in the fog. She aimed her staff carefully at the dragon. "To quote the void walkers, this is a no fly zone," she sneered, firing a blast at the silhouette.

The Night Fury disappeared in the fog, but the green fireball still flew in. A second later, there was a flash signifying it hit something. "Gotcha," she muttered before smirking as 'Dumber' came back, holding the unconscious Hiccup. "Where's the Night Fury?" she demanded.

"Which one?" asked Dumber.

"What...oh, I don't care. I got half of what I want already," said Circe, readying the spell she had cooked up specially.

...

Astrid woke up with a start, sweating. The dream about Berk had been shockingly lifelike, like watching one of the magic mirrors that Matt's security teams used to view sections of the base. "Ok, I think I need to get fresh air," said Astrid.

She staggered out, Lao glaring from his desk in the medibay but not stopping her except to tell her to come back the second she got light headed-ness, and almost ran into Fenris who was trying to come in.

"Fenris, I just the strangest..." started Astrid before pausing and asking, "What's with the collar?"

"Lynch," growled Fenris, finally losing it and tearing the collar off before pausing, "You were saying? "

"Uh, right, I just had a weird dream," said Astrid.

"You had it too?" said Fenris gravely before saying, "We must see Lynch immediately."

"I'm guessing that means it wasn't just a dream then," said Astrid.

"Indeed it wasn't. Something foul is afoot in Midgard," said Fenris darkly before the alarms began to ring. "Unauthorized aerial contacts...all hands to code yellow," said the PA.

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Matt had an assault squad ready to go as WARDEN mentioned that the contacts were almost on top of them. "Ok, on the count of 3, we blast em...1...2...ARRRGH!" said Matt, screaming as Kala barreled into him and knocked him off the cliff, into the water and into the waiting embrace of Steampipe.

"Matt, I thought you were going to get around to getting the ship's sensors to recognize Kala and the other dragons," said Chloe.

The only reply was the usual scream caused by a Steampipe 'glomp' before there was then a 'ptui' and Matt ended up head first in the ice.

Chloe turned to Chip and said, "Chip, you know you're supposed to double-check Matt's work."

"Oh sure, take the time to patch the bunch of dragons we aren't going to be seeing again in about two weeks. That seems so vital," said Chip in a sarcastic tone.

Kala just made an angry snarl at that before slowly writing a word... 'Circe'.

"Oh great, what is she doing this time? Spitting fire at the seagulls?" asked Draco.

Fenris however was pointing grimly at the second word...Berk.

"Oh great, a talking dragon," said Chip, "That's going to compromise our cover big time."

"She's clearly smarter than you...why do you think she would write those words together?" snapped Fenris.

"Fenris, she's stripped of all her powers and her humanity," said Chip.

"What little humanity she had to begin with," added Draco.

"Unless she's take singing lessons from sirens, there's not much she can do as a dragon besides what a dragon can normally do," continued Chip.

"Which admittedly is a lot of damage anyways," said Draco.

Kala shook her head rapidly, rubbing out and instead writing 'Shar Khan'

The group exchanged looks. "That can't be possible, right?" asked Draco.

"Not unless Taleth came back and happened across her," said Chip.

Matt pulled himself over the edge, groaning "What did I miss?"

"Circe's on Berk and apparently she's had an upgrade," said Chip.

"Oh...bloody karma...DON'T say a word, wolfy!" snapped Matt. Fenris didn't say a word, but that huge grin on his face said everything for him.

"Ok, let's go kill her. She's in our jurisdiction if she's dragoned up," said Chloe angrily.

"And we better move fast if Circe's going to try to make Berk like...like...like her own island that I can't figure out how to pronounce the name of," said Matt.

"Hiccup," said Astrid in horror.

"Don't worry, he's a smart kid," said NegaMorph, "Besides, she doesn't have a cloak to use on him now."

"She may not need one," said Astrid darkly.

"How would you know?" asked Draco.

"I saw her...I dreamt what she was doing," said Astrid faintly.

Fenris nodded, "It is how we find and stop dark forces."

"Let me guess, she was turning Berk into a zoo," said Matt.

"Yes, we must stop her," said Fenris.

"And assuming everyone in town has been transfigured and won't remember what happened when they're changed back, that means we won't have to hide," said NegaMorph.

"Good, get the plasma cannons and stun guns," said Matt cheerfully.

"And I'll go fetch Dune Runner," said Chip, "He's getting antsy since he can't even use vehicle mode to hide from locals."

"Fine," said Matt.

"Just a reminder that Circe will be most likely throwing her transformed victims at us, so we mustn't use too much force," said Fenris.

"That's what the stun guns are for," said Matt.

...

The gang chose, in a surprise show of strategy from Matt, to set down in the forest and sneak into town. Dune Runner provided transport in his dune buggy form, but he wanted a quick recap, "So, dis Circe be pretty much de same Circe from myth and ya blew up her island, trapped in dragon form, and now she's back for revenge somehow stronger than before, right?" he asked.

"That's about the gist of it," said Matt.

"Any ideas of how she got stronger?" asked Dune Runner.

"Evil magic most likely," said Chloe calmly.

"But ya said she can't do much magic in her dragon form," said Dune Runner.

"Kala says she's gone Shar Khan-ish, so maybe she can now," said Matt, peering round a tree.

"Dat kidna t'ing don't happen by dumb luck," said Dune Runner, "How'd she-"

Matt flipped off the power on Dune Runner's stereo. "We're supposed to be stealthy," he said.

Dune Runner gave an annoyed rumble from his engine as the group headed in. "This can only be Hel's work. She cannot act personally so

she is using Circe," Fenris said.

"Darn, I was hoping she'd send pointy-ears again," said Matt.

Chloe paused at that, "Hey...anyone hear that?"

"Hear what?" asked Chip.

On cue, an anthro dragoness leapt down, aiming a downward cut with a black serrated axe at Matt who calmly side stepped and punched her under the snout.

"Is that Circe?" asked Chip.

"No, wrong kind of dragon," said Astrid, "Didn't think she had a Deadly Nadder."

Matt nodded, holding the dazed dragoness before making it headbutt a tree. "Ok, time to talk, where's your boss hiding?" he said

"Doesn't need to hide..." said the dragoness, "She has the whole town..."

"Not the reply I wanted. Try again. What is her current location in the town?" said Matt manically, stamping on the dragoness's wing.

"AH! The great hall, the largest building!" yelped the dragoness.

"Good girl," said Matt, before pushing her towards Chloe who clothlined her, sending her sprawling onto her back, out cold.

Chip turned to Kala and asked, "How many more of these dragon hybrids can we expect?" Kala shrugged at that, Chloe just facepalming.

"Ok, Circe couldn't have gotten a whole army of dragons, but we ought to ready to react against at least Taleth's usual entourage of Shar-Virk," said Chloe. Kala shrugged again, Chloe glaring and saying, "Thanks...real helpful."

"Do you at least know how many of the kids got away?" asked Draco. Kala shook her head resounded at that.

Matt sighed and said, "Just expect anything."

...

Circe sighed as the view from Dumb went black as she passed out. "I should have known. At least they're punctual."

"Shall I go smoke them out?" asked Dumber.

"No, we let them come to us. I set up a fun little field of magic for them. The brother and sister will be fine. Their men...not so much," she sneered.

"What about the wolf warriors?" asked Dumber.

"Four against 3 times that. There is no contest," said Circe loftily.

Dumber tried counting that up on his claws, but he didn't seem to be getting very far. "It means we will win." said Circe after a minute, taking a little pity on him

Dumber nodded before asking, "Shouldn't we go get...uh...whatshername?"

"Your friend had her chance," said Circe calmly.

"But, aren't we supposed to stick together?" asked Dumber.

"Only unless it results in my injury," said Circe. Dumber started to look upset so Circe said, "If she's a strong warrior, she'll be back soon on her own."

Dumber smiled happily at that, "Yeah...she'll be fine."

"Good, now get the troops ready. Our visitors will be here shortly," said Circe.

"Ok," said Dumber happily.

...

The gang soon reached the edge of the village. So far, it looked deserted but they knew that would change once they walked in. "Ok, here's the plan: we go in, cut Circe's head off, and go home and eat some of Draco's 500 alarm chili," said Matt darkly.

"Uh huh, and what about the dozen or so mutated heads that stand between us and Circe?" asked Chloe.

"We hit them in the head till they go sleepy night-night," said Matt sarcastically.

"You do know that it's going to be nearly that simple," said Chip.

"All military plans falter once they've hit the battlefield," said Matt, "It's how you improvise that wins the battle."

"That was actually wise...who are you and what have you done with my brother?" said Chloe darkly.

"What? I've picked some wisdom over the years," said Matt.

"Yeah, about enough to fill a measuring cup," said Chris.

"Not cool," said Matt flatly as the other grinned

"Nevertheless, we must be ready for whatever monstrosities or spells Circe may throw at us," said Fenris.

"Like what?" said Chris in a bored tone.

"Like a spell to turn us all into trees," said Fenris before pausing and saying, "Or am I confusing her with another sorceress?"

"Possibly," said Matt gloomily.

"Either way, let's get this over with before someone eat something they shouldn't," said Chloe.

The group slowly inched out the treeline into town. "Ok, getting alot of movement, don't look at the doorways," said a trooper.

"Why not?" asked Astrid.

"Cause of what's looking back," said Matt who had looked.

Of course, that just made Astrid curious and she glanced at the doorways. Several anthropomorphic animals in Viking garbs were snarling from the doorways as well as some weird ones that didn't seem to be like any animal. "It's not bad as her island, is it?" she asked.

"I dunno, it looks worse," said Chris who coughed for a second.

"But I'm sure it's a lot easier to reverse," said Matt.

The others didn't look too convinced. "At least they're just...waiting...for us," said Matt, his voice trailing off as that train of thought set off his mental alarm bells

"It's not a trap if you know you're walking into one, right?" asked Astrid.

"We might have twigged on a little late," said Techo.

"WAY too late," said Chris who coughed again.

The cough soon carried around, everyone seemed to be coughing, though some were cough less badly than others and Astrid and Fenris didn't seem bothered at all. Matt, Chloe and Techo seemed ok too. "Ok, I told everyone, take their shots!" snapped Chloe, walking up to Chris who was doubled over, "Chris, you're a werewolf, I'm sure you can tough out whatever she's using on us."

Chris just coughed before rasping "Water...water..."

"You should have had a drink before we left," snapped Matt, tossing a plasma orb at the feet...claws of one of the minions who got a little too bold.

"Well I don't feel too bad," said Morph, "Draco, you feel okay?" A dry rasping was all that Morph got so he turned his head towards Draco and saw that it become a flatter in a way that reptiles weren't supposed to be. "EEL FACE!" yelled Morph before jumping onto Matt's head. Chloe sighed as Matt backpedalled and over the cliff the houses were near, a splash and a 'snap' heard.

Draco wasn't the only one with 'eel face'. Almost everyone was gasping and flopping like fish. Kala had moved as far away as she could from them. Matt clambered up, furiously angry. "Ok...WHAT THE FUCK IS GOING ON?" he screamed.

"It would seem that Circe has set up a subtle spell meant to incapacitate us," said Chip, "It appears that our more vulnerable party members are being turned into eels."

"Oh, that's just wrong," said Techo gloomily.

"Fortunately, there's at least some of us who are unaffected by this spell, myself included," said Chip before he noticed more hissing sounds and noticed that his hands have been replaced by eel heads. "Ok, this is freaky even for us," he said.

"Ok. Now I have to murder something. Techo, toss our team in the sea before they suffocate," said Matt darkly, causing Techo to snap "Why me?"

"Cause I've already taken a dip, it's your turn," snapped Matt.

...

Circe was laughing her head off at the view through a magic mirror, though she was personally surprised that the 'third' member had been their annoying engineer and not the Night Fury. "This will be easier than I thought," said Circe, "They won't have their friends to bail them out this time."

"We should be careful. I may be dumb but I'm careful," said Dumber.

"No, you're Dumber, Dumb is taking her sweet time getting back here," said Circe.

"I mean, if you do not treat your prey with respect, you end up AS prey," said Dumber.

"Respect is the last thing I have for them," said Circe.

Dumber sighed. "I warned you," he said sagely.

Circe gave him a glare before muttering, "What could he possibly know? His brain couldn't fill in that skull before he was altered."

"He has a point. The unwary predator usually becomes prey," said Hel's voice in Circe's head.

Circe groaned and said, "Oh, not you too."

"Yes, for once the witless wyrm has spout a bit of wisdom I can agree with," said Hel's voice, "Overconfidence has been the fall of too many of my agents. You have the chance of avoiding the same trap."

"I can deal with these fools. There is only 3 of them now," snapped Circe.

"Have you not been counting right? Because the two wolf warriors are not in your capture," said Hel.

"5 then...against an army," said Circe confidently.

"Don't miss your guess yet. Their companions are particularly strange ones, one that could find ways around the spells," said Hel, "Have

you at least gotten the dragons ensorcelled?"

"Of course, I'm just preparing something special for my old pet," said Circe with a smirk.

"Whatever you wish, just make sure you take the girl alive," said Hel.

"Yes, yes," said Circe, happy in the knowledge that there were so many definitions of 'alive'.

...

Meanwhile, the remaining members of the group were going over their plan, what little there was to it.

"Ok, so we're down to 2 dog people, two cyborgs, and me," said Chloe, gloomily.

"We still have Dune Runner," pointed out Techo.

"Let's save him for last," said Matt, "He'll need to be as big a surprise as we can manage."

"For once, a good idea," said Chloe testily.

"I would have hoped that some of your companions would have been too inhuman to be changed," said Fenris, "Just us against a whole village's worth of cursed man-beasts is not good odds."

Matt nodded, "Yeah, we should go back and send the spiderbots in...have we passed that pot before?"

The other paused and looked at the pot Matt had pointed out. "Eh, all pots look the same to me," said Techo.

"Yes, but this one has that smear on the side that kinda looks like a mouse," said Matt as he knelt down to pick up the pot only for it to hop sideways away from him. "What the...there'd better not be a bot under here," he muttered, taking aim at it.

The pot tried to hop away, but Matt shattered it with a quick blast. The Smothering Smokebreath that was under the pot gave him an annoyed look. "What's that thing doing here?" asked Techo, "They aren't allowed to be anywhere near this village unless they were with the...oh no."

"Techo...what's going on?" said Matt warningly, glaring at the Smokebreath. There was a rush of movement, a 'squee' of victory, and Matt found himself face first on the ground while something with metal legs danced on him.

Chloe just grinned. "Looks like we got some firepower after all," she said, Fenris looking skeptical.

"The Smokebreaths are not a manageable sort of dragons, even back in my time," said Fenris, "I doubt you could have possibly tamed them, even with those odd automatons."

The spiderbot scuttled around to look at Fenris. "Who overgrown

poodle?" it asked.

"That's right, Fenris hasn't met these guys before," said Techo, "He would have definitely remembered if he had."

Matt grinned evilly. "Spiderbot...have fun," he said, the spiderbot laughing manically before sizing Fenris up and apparently doing some stretches.

"Do we have time for this?" asked Astrid, "We've still got to defeat Circe."

"Trust me, he should know," said Chloe as Fenris looked at the bot and stamped on it.

"There, can we now get back to the job-" he began before the spiderbot under his foot grabbed said foot and throw him into a boulder.

"How many Smokebreaths did the spiderbots bring?" asked Techo before turning to Astrid and saying, "Yes, I know there are more spiderbots. There's almost never just one." On cue, a half dozen spiderbot emerged from the unlikeliest of places, including Astrid's satchel and the same pot the Smokebreath had been in. "Probably more still," said Techo, "And if they brought enough Smokebreaths, they should be plenty enough to keep the beast people busy while we deal with Circe."

"So we got our army. You respecting them yet, Fenris?" asked Matt.

Fenris lifted his head and said, "I've yet to see that they've managed to train Smokebreaths."

One of the spiderbots nodded at that, tossing a stick and saying "Fetch."

The Smokebreath quickly took off and caught the stick in its mouth. "One Smokebreath is unimpressive." Another spiderbot pointed at Fenris and said, "Sic 'im." Six Smokebreaths immediately flew out from the hiding places and converged on Fenris. Matt winced before sighing in relief to see the Smokebreaths had simply nicked his weapon and the plating from his armor.

"Kinda sad, isn't it?" asked Techo before with a sudden yelp, a Smokebreath flew off with the lower half of Fenris's armor.

"Not to mention indecent," said Chloe, covering her eyes.

Matt sighed, ending a blast at the Smokebreath in question and tossing the armor back. "This is a children's show," he snapped.

"Hey, fourth wall breaks are my job," said a voice. Matt turned to see a dripping wet Morph who said, "By the way, why'd you leave me in the water?"

"Cause," said Matt promptly.

"Can we focus on what's important now?!" yelled Chloe before covering

her mouth as growling was heard.

"Well done," said Matt sarcastically

"Ok, spiderbots, time to assault the bad guys," said Techo. There was a little gap of silence before a piece of paper was thrown into his face. He peeled it off and read, "Union coffee break?!"

"Get em!" yelled Matt as the first monster turned the corner and met Matt coming the other way. Matt looked up to see a snarling badger's head glaring at him. "Badger, that's a new twist," commented Matt. The badger snarled before whimpering as Matt shifted to hybrid form and showed his fangs

Chloe shifted to hybrid form and said, "We can take this petting zoo, at least until the spiderbots come back."

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Matt poked the bars of the cage the group were in, saying in a sarcastic sing-song voice "We can hold them till the spiderbots arrive."

"Ok, maybe betting on the spiderbots was a bad idea..." started Chloe.

"You know they never show up when you expect them to," said Techo.

"Yeah, they're as reliable as Morph," said Techo.

"Speaking of whom, anyone see where he's run off to?" asked Matt.

"Who cares?" snapped Chloe.

"Ah, what does it matter? We've gotten out of worst scraps than this," said Matt.

"DON'T SAY THAT!" everyone yelled.

"I'm only saying it because it's-" started Matt before Chloe zapped him.

A minute later and Circe strolled into view. "Ah, this is perfect, utterly perfect," she said tauntingly.

"Circe, how much did you pay that plastic surgeon? You know it'll look bad once you hit old age," said Chloe.

"Oh, I still have friends," said Circe calmly, aiming her staff at Chloe before pausing, Hel's warning about not touching the void walkers echoing in her head. Circe lowered her staff and said, "You know, I've already dealt with your crew and your village. You all know where the wolves will be going. That leaves me to ponder what to do with the rest of you."

"Cut to the chase, let us go and let us kill you? We have the half dragon gig," said Matt.

"Yes, that makes of a kind, does it not?" asked Circe, "Imagine what we could accomplish together."

"Lady, you couldn't win Odysseus over, you can't win me," said Matt.

Circe snapped at that, "How dare you bring up that blind fool."

"Aw, it wasn't that bad a loss," said Matt teasingly, "It only ended up an immortal legend."

"What?" snapped Circe, Matt's words getting under her skin.

"Oh yeah, you should hear how many different versions of that story we have back in my universe," said Matt, "Some of them even have your magic backfiring on yourself and you becoming a pig. Guess they weren't that far off."

Circe roared angrily, forgetting herself and sending a blast at Matt. Matt stepped back, allowing the blast to hit the bars which melted a part. "Thanks, dumb broad," said Matt before jumping out. What he got was a blow under the chin that sent him flying. Matt rubbed his jaw to make sure it was still in place. "Ok, ow," he said.

"You fool, even as an Asgardian I could defeat you in hand to hand. Now my strength is a thousand times that. That and you will have your own troubles," said Circe before hearing a scuttling, Matt grinning "Really? So do you."

Smoke started to fill up the area, mostly around the cages. "What is, OW!" snapped Circe before her yells became muffled as a spiderbot clamped over her face.

"Yep, never there when you expect them," said Techo.

"RUN AWAY!" yelled Matt.

With Circe distracted, it was easy for the others to break out of their cages and they started for the door.

Several of Circe's beastmen leapt into view, though sadly they met Matt and Chloe first who didn't even slow down, simply punching them out as they ran by.

As they ran out, a loud hooting and snarling got their attention. They both looked up to see a gorilla man jumping on a nearby roof. "Wait a sec, is that...Snotlout?" asked Matt.

Chloe and Astrid stared for a minute before laughing out loud before Snotlout threw a barrel at them. The group got out of the way, but Snotlout kept tossing down more barrels at them. "Where is he getting all those barrels from?" asked Fenris.

"Who cares?" snapped Techo, checking his wrist comp storage for something. As soon as he got what he wanted, he said, "Someone keep his attention while I throw this."

Snotlout however seemed to have finally ran out of barrels, instead leaping down and charging who he thought of as the best target, a smiling Techo. Sadly, none of the Vikings knew of one of the

unwritten rules of Nullspace: When a mercenary is grinning, someone else is about to stop. Techo simply sidestepped Snotlout as he was charging by and slapped something onto his back. Snotlout paused and tried to reach it with his long arms, but the thing went off and zapped him before he could reach it.

"Gotta love those tazer discs," he said confidently before poking Snotlout, "He's fine...I think."

"Wonder where the other guys are," said Astrid.

"I don't wanna know. At least we know the twins are probably trying to kill each other," said Matt, looking around.

"I suggest we move before we run into someone who'd actually be a threat," said Chloe.

"Like who?" said Techo scathingly.

There was a loud roar as a lion man charged around the corner. His clothes and the shape of his mane made it pretty easy to guess who he was. "Stoick, figures," said Matt flatly.

Fenris glared. "I have had enough of this witch and her sorcery," he growled, aiming a blow at Stoick. However, Stoick had pretty sharp reflexes and being made part feline enhanced them quite a bit so he was easily able to move out of the way of the blow, grab Fenris's arm, and toss him over his shoulder. Fenris however had millennia of practice, rolling as he landed and jumping to his feet with ease. "Enough. I was told Midgardians were tougher than this."

Stoick roared before charging at Fenris again. Fenris smirked before sidestepping and bringing a fist down on the back of Stoick's head as he passed. Stoick crumpled over, down for the count. "Now then, can we move on?" asked Fenris.

"Depends if anyone shows up," said Matt. There was a pause before Matt said, "Yeah, now we can move on." The group turned to leave, but not before Matt yelled "SPIDERBOTS, BEARD HER!"

"Beard her?" asked Astrid.

"You'll see what I mean later," said Matt.

...

After some running, the others had taken refuge in Stoick's house, taking the logical step that it would be the last place he'd look.

"Ok, so we have a crazy sorceress who's half dragon and has a bunch of beast men under her control," said Chloe, "What's the easiest way to defeat that?"

Fenris looked thoughtful before saying, "Breaking a sorcerer's staff usually undoes all their spells."

"If she's as smart as you say, she'll have thought of that," said Techo.

"Right, we'll need an expert thief to snatch that staff and I happen to have one on speed dial," said Matt.

...

NegaMorph grinned to himself as he carefully picked the lock on Matt's safe. There was bound to be some good blackmail material in here that he could use. He just needed silence while he got past the booby traps...

Just then, a ringing sound came from his pocket. NegaMorph froze and said, "Oh no."

...

Matt looked at his comm as the ringing became an ominous dial tone. "Huh, he musta left it off the hook. He must be exploding from a lack of stuff to do," he muttered.

"Give it a minute, he'll answer to me," said Chloe.

With that, NegaMorph landed next to her, smoking. "What...kind of person...booby traps his safe...with C4?" he rasped.

"The kind who knows how to permanently deal with snoopers," said Matt.

"I hate you...I presume there's a reason you rang," NegaMorph groaned.

"Yep, we need you to steal a sorceress's staff," said Chloe.

"Ok, I-WHAT?" said NegaMorph, yelling the last part in shock.

"Unless you think you can snap it right there," said Fenris.

"You're all nuts...nuts, I tell you," said NegaMorph, exasperated.

"Compared to the crazy lady who currently has the staff, we're all perfectly sane. Ok, maybe Matt's still crazy," said Chloe.

"Fine...who are we stealing it off?" asked NegaMorph gloomily.

"Circe of course," said Astrid.

NegaMorph's face went blank at that. "Circe," he repeated in a deadpan voice.

"Yeah, she got thumbs again too," said Matt.

"Fine...so, as I am immune to magic, you chose me, correct?" said NegaMorph in the same voice.

"He's immune to magic?" asked Astrid.

"Well...I think he's too fluid to be trapped by a transformation

spell," said Chloe, "Not to mention his effective regeneration so I think that covers pretty much all Circe can throw at him."

"That cinches it. Off you go, Nega," said Matt, grabbing NegaMorph, opening some window shutters and throwing Nega out the window.

...

Circe would fortunately be preoccupied for a while with the 'present' the spiderbots had given her.

"Don't laugh...don't even grin," she said darkly, a large bushy beard superglued to the underside of her snout. Dumb, who had gotten back by then, was trying her hardest to keep a straight face. "I'm warning you...is my pet ready yet?" Circe snapped.

"His mind is still fighting," said Dumb, "He's got a rather strong will for such a small human."

"Urgh...if I still had that cloak," muttered Circe.

"Don't you technically have your own cloak's magic?" asked Dumb.

"Yes...and the stupid cloak's part of me. It's not like I can tear my own skin off," snapped Circe.

"You don't shed?" asked Dumb.

"What kind of question is that? Of course I don't!" snapped Circe.

"Oh, I just thought you'd be able to make magic with your shed skin," said Dumb.

"Earghâ€|" said Circe in horror.

"I've heard that's what some witches do," said Dumb.

"Not this wit...did you just call me a witch?" said Circe dangerously.

"Well, aren't you one?" asked Dumber, not taking the hint.

"No...I am a SORCERESS!" yelled Circe, blowing Dumb and Dumber off their claws.

"What's the difference?" asked Dumber dizzily.

"The difference is I AM NOT A HAG!" snapped Circe.

"Who said anything about hags?" asked Dumb.

Circe sighed and said, "I'm going to have to turn your feet to stone for that insult."

"But stone feet itch like crazy," whined Dumber.

Circe paused at that, sensing something in the room. "Dumb, Dumber,

be careful," she said sternly, looking around.

"Haven't we earned better names by now?" asked Dumb.

"NO!" snapped Circe, sending a few blasts at their feet to make them jump to attention, "Now start sniffing. There's something here that shouldn't be."

"There's nothing here, just your staff floating towards the door," said Dumb, annoyed.

"My what?!" yelled Circe, spinning around. Her staff was indeed bobbing towards the door slowly. "Hey, get back here!" snapped Circe, lunging at it and getting hit on the head with it. The staff wagged towards Dumb and Dumber as if someone was cheekily waving it before it zipped out the door.

"GET MY STAFF BACK, YOU MORONS!" yelled Circe, spreading her wings to go off in pursuit herself. However, she didn't get further than the door of the great hall when she suddenly got tangled up in wires that someone had strung across the room. Her struggling with the wires soon caused a tub of tar to be dropped on her, followed by a pillow's feather stuffing. She growled as she heard the high-pitched laughter of the metal bots.

Dumb and Dumber soon walked out and looked up at her. "Where'd that big duck come from?" asked Dumber.

"IT'S ME, YOU MORONS! GET MY STAFF BACK OR PERISH!" Circe screeched. The two dragons quickly ran out the door only to hit a tripwire and land on their faces.

NegaMorph was laughing his head off, high fiving a spiderbot. "Matt hides the DVD's under his bunk," he said, the spiderbot cackling evilly.

"Now let's see about breaking this thing," said NegaMorph before grabbing it with all three hands and hand-mouth and trying to snap it. The spiderbots tried to help, firing a cutting laser that did nothing to the staff but did cut NegaMorph in half lengthways. "I think those guys can break it themselves," said NegaMorph as he pieced himself back together.

"They coming to kiiiilll yooooouâ€¦!" said the spiderbot, vanishing as Circe stomped into range.

"YOU!" she snarled

"Gotta go," said NegaMorph before leaping back into his shadow. He realized suddenly with horror that the staff wasn't phasing. "Ok, gonna take the scenic route then," said NegaMorph before spreading his wings and taking off.

A second late,r a blast of magic hit him. NegaMorph lost altitude and said, "This isn't gonna be an easy getaway." He looked down to see Circe slinging spells like crazy. "Ok, gotta avoid the crazy witch, bring the stick to Lynch, let him break it, end of story," said NegaMorph to himself.

A second blast knocked him down. NegaMorph reconstituted himself, a

little slower than he would have liked. "Ok, it shouldn't be that hard to outrun her on foot, right?" he asked in a tone that suggests his head hadn't regenerated quite right.

A clawed hand grabbed him at that. "Not just yet, my little monster," sneered Circe, her staff glowing ominously,

"Oh, silly me, I should have asked first," said NegaMorph, "May I please have this staff?"

"No," said Circe flatly, zapping NegaMorph between the eyes, causing him to judder, spouting rubbish as the spell went to work.

...

Sometime later, the others were starting to wonder what was taking NegaMorph. "He should have been back here by now," said Chloe, starting to sound worried.

"He's tougher than the spiderbots. I think he's fine," said Matt, messing with his Atlantean wrist comp.

"I'm pretty sure the spiderbots are tougher. We should have sent them instead," said Techo.

"They stand out," said Matt, the others nodding in agreement.

"If he takes too much longer, I say we go after Circe ourselves," said Chloe.

"Oh, ok," said Matt in a bored tone, getting up before a knock was heard. Everyone paused before Matt went to the door and asked, "Who's there?"

"Your delivery boy. Now let me before I just toss this walking stick into the sea," snapped NegaMorph's voice. Matt shrugged, opening the door and dragging NegaMorph inside.

"What took you so long?" asked Astrid.

"Circe's a lot harder to steal from than you would think," said NegaMorph, "I just barely escaped by the skin of my teeth."

Matt glared. "Where's the staff? I want to break it," he said childishly.

"Oh, right, here it is," said NegaMorph pulling it out, "This thing's been a real pain to keep in storage."

Matt lifted up the staff before shrugging, tossing it into the air and sending a pulse of plasma into it, causing it to turn to ash. "There, spell's broken, villain's beaten, let's go back to base," said Matt.

"I don't think so," said Fenris, "That staff seemed to be destroyed too simply. It should have at least given off a flash or something."

"That only happens in the films. I wreck magical crap all the time,

sometimes by accident," said Matt casually before everyone heard NegaMorph cackling.

"Why is NegaMorph laughing like that?" asked Astrid.

"Because he's given me a fake staff and kept the real one so he can hock it off at an auction," said Matt matter-of-factly before turning, grabbing NegaMorph, and shaking him to make him drop the real staff. After some shaking and nothing popping out, Matt righted NegaMorph and snapped "Ok, where's the staff? We are not having a repeat of New Jersey at the last Christmas party."

NegaMorph just kept cackling, a bit of walleyed look to him. "Ok, can you please make him stop that? It's starting to creep me out," said Astrid.

Matt nodded before clicking his fingers and making NegaMorph's head explode. After a few seconds, NegaMorph's head regrew. He looked around before asking, "When did I come back here?"

"A few minutes ago, why do you ask?" said Matt, just knowing that he would not like the reply.

"Cause the last thing I remember was Circe zapping me," said NegaMorph.

"Wait, then who was calling the shots...everyone out...NOW!" snapped Matt.

"It's that bad, is it?" asked Chloe.

Techo peeked outside and said, "Already is."

Matt ran to the window, pushing Techo out the way to see several of the beastmen and two identical ones. "Oh look, the twins are goats again," said Matt.

"Actually, I think they're bighorn sheep," said Techo.

"Weird," said Matt, peering. "How can we be sure it's them?" before the two started fighting. "Yeah, it's them," he said bluntly

"Eh, they're just a pack of dumb animals with thumbs, we can take them," said NegaMorph.

"They got crossbows," said Techo, ducking as an arrow shot in and embedded itself in NegaMorph's forehead.

NegaMorph's eyes crossed as he looked at the arrow and said, "Now I'm mad." Another arrow shot in and landed deeper in NegaMorph's head. "Now I'm grablifspikiffopbiff..." said NegaMorph as he started babbling.

"Ok, you had to say it. Uh oh, here comes queen bitch," said Matt, peering out to see Circe walking into view.

"There's no point in hiding now," said Circe, "Come out and surrender."

"Not a chance!" called Matt.

"You're going to have face defeat eventually," said Circe, "You may as well do so with some dignity and in as singular a piece as you can stay."

A plasma bolt shot out and hit Circe in the face at that. "Booya...right on the beard!" Matt called before being pushed aside as Astrid tried to get a look.

Eventually, the smoke drifted off to reveal that Circe looked mostly alright aside from the bad-smelling burn mark under her chin. "Thank you, I've been trying to get that thing off," said Circe as she waved the fumes away.

"Hmm...would have expected the spiderbots to account for that," said Matt thoughtfully before there was an electrical crackling and the beard re-appeared twice its previous size. "I must figure out how they make them," said Matt.

"So you don't have to worry about going bald?" asked Morph.

Matt growled before turning to Morph. "Ok...how?" he said, before ducking as several arrows shot in

"I came in through the back," said Morph, not perturbed at all by the arrows now sticking out of his chest, "I went around seeing if there was anyone left to play with and I couldn't find a few guys who'd rather be on our team."

"There's a back door?" said Matt confused.

"Well, duh," said Morph, "Stoick never invited you to his house for dinner, did he?"

"Morph, logic," said Matt darkly, before glaring at Morph who finally said "Oh, you wanna use it."

"Considering the mob's waiting outside the front door, yes," said Matt.

Chloe however asked the other clear question. "Who's waiting outside the back door?"

"Her dragon flunkies," said Morph, "But I was too sneaky for them."

"Her dragon idiots are out front with her," snapped Matt, before glaring and heading to the back door and throwing it open, plasma orb at the ready.

What was on the other side of the door was something Matt did not expect. At first glance, it looked like an armored Toothless with a rider in armor on his back. But then Matt noticed the armor on both dragon and rider were directly attached to each other in such a way it was very difficult to see where one end and the other began. The armor itself was like a black beetle's carapace that did not look it came off.

"What the hell is that?" snapped Chloe.

"If I had to guess, it's Circe's pet project," said Techo.

"Let's fry it," said Matt, aiming a plasma orb.

"Wait! Can't you see who that is?!" cried Astrid.

"It's another of Circe's buddies," said Matt, before Chloe slapped him.

"It's Hiccup and Toothless, you fools," said Fenris.

"Wait, what?" said Matt.

NegaMorph had managed to remove the arrows from his head and said, "Who else could it be? It's not Circe caught Kala."

Matt looked closer before pushing Hiccup off. Hiccup didn't fall off all the way as the feet of his armor were firmly attached to Toothless's chest armor, though did caused Toothless to lean a lot to one side. Matt yelped at that as Fenris and Astrid helped Toothless back up. "She...oh, that's just creepy," he said.

Hiccup tried to say something, but it came out muffled. "Hang on a sec," said Techo before picking up a knife and using it to pry open the plates around Hiccup's mouth. The fact that the broken edges of the plates leaked black fluid was not a good sign.

"First, off, ow, that hurt," said Hiccup, "Second thing, you got to get out of here, quick."

"Oh please. We never run...that probably explains the amount of trouble we get into," said NegaMorph.

"You don't understand. Circe's going to give me the order to attack any minute now and this armor will make me do it," said Hiccup.

"Ok...maybe we should run?" said Matt carefully.

"Hiccup, there has to be some way we can stop her," said Astrid.

"I'm having a hard time seeing how," said Hiccup, "Her staff is the key to all this, but it can be only be broken in her hands."

Matt paused before saying "And we'll never get close...unless...WE SURRENDER!" yelling the last part to everyone's surprise.

"I'm sorry, did I hear that right or is my hearing center got too big a gap in it?" asked NegaMorph as he massaged his temples.

"Just do it." hissed Chloe, getting the same idea

Techo had also cottoned on and sent a signal through his comm before going to the window and shouting out, "Ok, Circe, you win! We give up!"

Circe looked rather surprised at that. "Wait...are you sure?" she called, uncertain.

"You've got us in checkmate, pinned on all sides," called Matt, "This is our best way out."

"I'm not sureâ€¦" began one of her companions only to jump as Circe snapped "DON'T JINX IT! The Norns are always listening."

Chloe shouted out, "Can we add a few conditions to our surrender?"

"NO!" snapped Circe angrily.

"Fair enough," called Chloe, "We're coming out through the front now, so don't start shooting at us." Circe was practically giddy as the group walked out unsteadily

"If you don't mind me asking, what's up with that armor that Hiccup and Toothless are wearing?" asked Matt.

"A little something, they work far better together after all...and once the armor is finished, he won't need Toothless anymore," said Circe smugly.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Astrid with a growl.

"Well, that armor is actually like a cocoon," said Circe, "Eventually, it'll completely cover the both of them and they'll enter into a full pupation stage. I admit I'm not entirely sure what will emerge from their metamorphosis, but I'm certain it will be magnificent."

Matt cocked his head at that before voicing what even Dumb and Dumber were thinking. "You're nutso, lady."

Circe gave an annoyed sigh and said mostly to herself, "You get a little creative with the fabric of life and everyone starts claiming you've lost your sanity. Is it so hard to find someone who appreciates my work?"

"Try Taleth, he's as nuts as you are," said Matt

"I'll take your word for it," said Circe dryly, "Now come along. I need to get those wolves down to Niflheim."

...

Hel sounded impressed. "So...you caught them?" she asked.

"The whole lot. Villagers, off-worlders, dragons, everyone," said Circe, "Nobody's going to be coming to their rescue."

Hel's voice turned angry at that, "You were told to leave the offworlders alone."

"Most of them are in the harbor right now," said Circe, "The only ones prisoner here are the hybrids, their technician, and those two...blob...creatures."

"You disobeyed me...wait, they're alive?" said Hel annoyed, before sounding worried.

"For the time being," said Circe, "I'm not yet certain what to do with them."

"Triple the guard on them, quadruple the guard!" snapped Hel.

"I have almost all my guards around them," said Circe, "If I assign more, I'd be leaving the wolf warriors more open."

"Get more!" snapped Hel before signing off.

Circe rolled her eyes before heading to expect the guards, stopping briefly to check her experimenting to escape. Hiccup's legs have been almost completely bound into Toothless's torso armor and the plating on both was becoming more extensive. Once Hiccup's lower body was fully bound into Toothless's armor, the metamorphosis stage would start. "Now if only I could get their minds to submit," said Circe, "If they maintain their hatred of me through the pupation, it could end up very bad for me."

But then she was sidetracked by a tingling that meant that a portal was opening close by.

She turned to see several fully armored night elf warriors emerge, their dark energy rifles at the ready before a very confused Maliki appeared. "Nflubby?" he said dizzily.

"What are you doing here?" asked Circe in an annoyed tone.

"Queen Hel is not taking chances with the prisoners, so she sent us for reinforcements," said one of the dark elves.

"Ngsui?" said Maliki before cracking his neck and shaking it. "Yeah...ouch...that jerk broke my neck," he complained.

"Fine, fine, go oversee the prisoners while I work," said Circe.

Malaki gave Circe an annoyed look and said, "You're not the one giving orders now, I am. I have rank and seniority over you." He turned to his elves and said, "Secure the prisoners." The elves nodded, walking forward and out the door without a word. "Tell me you caught the brat that killed me," snapped Malaki before seeing Hiccup. "By the void, what is that?" he said in horror.

"My pet project," said Circe, "I think they're coming along nicely."

"You're nuts," muttered Malaki.

"Is that the only response I'm going to get from critics?" asked Circe in an annoyed tone.

"I can see why you were banished," muttered Malaki before checking a communication crystal. "Are they there? Hello?" he snapped.

There was a bit of a delay before a voice responded, "All prisoners accounted for."

Malaki looked suspicious before saying casually "So...how was off duty?"

"Uh, great, well, as great as it can be," said the voice on the other end.

"Of course," said Malaki calmly, turning the crystal off and saying flatly, "Your guards are dead."

"Don't be ridiculous," said Circe, "They wouldn't risk cutting down innocent villagers, even if they have been changed."

"Either way, they've escaped," said Malaki calmly.

"Yes, but they've nowhere to run now," said Circe, "I set the portal for sending the wolves to Niflheim in the floor of their cells. They won't be able to get there in time to stop it. I just hope Hel doesn't take her sweet time in taking them."

"There is a reason that Hel does not wish them near here. From what the Norns told Hel, magic does not mix well with them," said Malaki calmly, an explosion heard on cue, "I rest my case"

Circe sighed and said, "I suppose we'll have to deal with them ourselves. Keep them occupied a moment while I gather the dragons."

Malaki sighed, walking to the door, opening it...and exploding when a plasma orb hit him. Circe looked up as Matt and the others marched in. "Ok, science project's over, fork over that staff," said Matt.

Circe just laughed, sending a blast at Chloe. The blast came faster than Chloe could anticipate and she struck in the chest before she could react. "Why you dirty-" started Matt before he was struck in the chest too. Matt winced and tried to throw a plasma orb at Circe but he couldn't get a spark.

"A little dose of anti-magic," said Circe, "Very hazardous to work with, but a controlled enough amount to keep you as mere mortals."

"Fair enough," said Techo before a blast hit him and he just grinned.

Circe gave him a curious look and asked, "Aren't you supposed to be crumpling?"

"Nothing magic here," said Techo, "Just good old technology. And speaking of which..." He pulled out his blaster and fired a couple of shots.

Circe yelped, her staff being dropped before she snarled. "Fine, I'll just use claws," she snapped before Matt threw something white on her face that said "Howdy."

As Circe tried to wipe Morph off her face, there was a sudden roaring as several dragons started flying in through the main hall's doors, among them the academy dragons. She finally pulled Morph off and threw him aside only for something birdlike to land on her head and an angular face to lower upside down into her view and scream in her face "YOU AN UGLY LADY!"

Circe snarled before blasting a gout of flame at Mac, sending him spiraling away. There was a pause before she shrieked, clutching her throat. "OWOWOWOWOWOWOWOW!" she yelled, hopping around. She ran over to the water barrel and ducked her head in, causing a spout of steam to shoot up. She lifted her head out with a sigh as the fake beard dropped off. She stared in horror before snapping, "Water? All it took was WATER?"

"Like I always say, spiderbots are unpredictable," said Techo.

Circe turned and glared at him before snarling, "I assure you that my wrath will not be so random, but it'll be much more...what is that noise?" She heard some sort of rumbling noise getting closer and closer. "Wait a minute, is that a-" she started before suddenly a wall burst open as a bright red vehicle hurtled through directly at her. "...car?" she managed to say before it made contact with her. The group watched as Circe was knocked back, landing on something that made an ominous 'snap'. "Ow, my tail!" yelled Circe, "You broke my tail!"

"I'd feel bad about it..." said the vehicle before it shifted into a tall four-armed robot, "But you've been messin' with me friends."

"No...nononono. Don't you realize what you almost did?" said Circe in horror, holding up her staff.

"Besides almost run ya over?" asked Dune Runner. Circe glared before sending a blast at Dune Runner

Dune Runner bent over backwards to avoid the blast before straightening. "Ya shouldn't be playin' with dangerous sticks like dat when ya got a broken limb," he said before reaching out and grabbing the staff.

"Let go!" yelled Circe as she tried to pull it back.

"Get it off her!" yelled Matt as Circe dug her claws in and pulled.

Circe and Dune Runner's struggled looked pretty much like a tug of war. Despite Dune Runner's height and limb advantage, Circe was stronger than she looked. Dune Runner tried to pulling it more upwards to use more advantage of his height, but Circe still clung on. Eventually, a creaking sound was heard before the staff snapped louder than one would expect from the acoustics. Dune Runner looked at the half in his servo and said, "Uh...oops."

Circe looked more horrified. "No...NO!" she screamed.

"Uh, I tink it can be fixed with some superglue," said Dune Runner.

"I think it's more serious than that," said Techo. "How serious?" asked Dune Runner.

"Like, 'clear the blast radius' serious," said Matt.

Circe was already twitching as she heard an ominous voice say, "You

have failed..."

Just then, NegaMorph popped in and said, "Ok, the doggies are out of their kennels. Did I miss anything good?" He noticed that everyone who could had run except for the staff glowing brighter and brighter. "Oh, dammit," he muttered.

He quickly started running towards the door, but his progress was slowed by the odd shift in gravity towards where Circe was. "Guys, help!" yelled NegaMorph, "I've seen enough movies involving infernal debt collection to know I don't want to be anywhere near here!"

Luckily for NegaMorph, Matt reached in to grab him. "Come on, slow coach," he said, dragging NegaMorph out.

"That was way too close," said NegaMorph.

"Might still be closer, if there's going to be a boom," said Matt.

The two paused for a second before running for it just as the building seemed to squeeze before being sucked into a single point.

Matt sighed and said, "Well, that's the end of that," before paling and asking, "But how am I supposed to explain what happened to the Great Hall?"

Just then, the air rippled and the Great Hall leapt back into place, all traces of damage gone. NegaMorph stared and said, "Okay...that's convenient."

A voice from nowhere, sultry in its tones said, "Consider it a...one off."

Matt and NegaMorph exchanged a glance before Matt said, "You know what, let's just go back to base."

"And how are we going to explain to everyone how they've missed the whole day?" asked NegaMorph.

Just then, Mulch walked by and said in a friendly, "Good afternoon, pleasant day, isn't it?"

The two looked at each other before NegaMorph said, "Hey, I don't care if he saw me, he didn't call me demon."

Just then, Fenris walked up to them and said, "It seems everything in this town is fine now."

"My, what a big furry fellow," said Mulch before walking off.

Fenris raised an eyebrow and said, "And it seems the townsfolk's memories are a bit...addled, along with their perception of reality."

"I'll say, Nega's not exactly disguised," said Matt.

"That may not last long," said Fenris, "Eventually, they'll be able

to notice strangeness again and I think we'd best take our leave before they do."

"Fine, I hope my men are ok," said Matt, before some happy whistling were heard followed by Chris's screams. "Makes a change," said Matt cheerfully.

...

By the time they all made it back to the base, Matt had discovered that they almost all had one thing in common: none of them want to even look at an eel for quite a long time.

"Sure nobody wants fish sticks?" said NegaMorph with an evil grin.

"NegaMorph, if you offer me fish, one more time, I will find the deepest trench around here, tie you to a 50-ton weight, and drop you in it," growled Draco.

"Aw...go on..." said Matt, waving a fish finger under Draco's nose. Draco snarled before chomping on Matt's hand.

Matt yelped, jumping back and clutching his now bleeding hand while Draco suddenly found a dozen or so blasters aimed at him "Hey, I've just gotten very tired of fish, particularly recently, he was asking for it," said Draco.

Chloe however looked horrified. "You drew blood...that's impossible...our dragon side makes that..." she said in a small voice before glaring apocalyptically at Draco.

"You probably still have that anti-magic in your system," said Techo, "I hear that stuff wreaks havoc with bodily functions."

"No, ours comes from these damn Atlantean nanites," said Chloe angrily before snapping to a guard, "Put Draco in his quarters."

As Draco was being dragged away, he called out, "This is not how you should be treating crewmembers!"

"Then you shouldn't try to bite my brother's hand off!" snapped Chloe.

"Alright, as soon as Astrid's got that damn amulet off her, I want this cruiser heading back to Avalar by the quickest useable route!" snapped Matt as he bandaged up his hand.

Fenris nodded, saying, "Two more days."

"Great, Hel couldn't send up any more-" started Matt before Chloe grabbed him by the neck to keep him from finishing that sentence.

"DO NOT SAY IT!" she screamed

"At least Circe's getting what's coming to her," said NegaMorph.

"Yup," said Matt happily.

...

Niflheim, despite its reputation, isn't an exact counterpart to Hell. Morality isn't as much of an issue as is the manner you have died. And abject failure is a certain ticket for Niflheim and it's still not a very nice place to go to.

"No...I was so close...SO CLOSE!" gibbered Circe.

"I warned you about getting complacent," said Hel in a weary tone.

"No...I was winning," gibbered Circe, not hearing Hel apparently.

"You failed to account for all their allies and you actually believed their false surrender," continued Hel, who was definitely ignoring Circe.

"No, I can still win, this is not happening," snapped Circe.

"It has happened and you have disappointed me. Maybe I'll let you have another go at it for the next wolf warrior, but clearly this one is beyond your capacities," said Hel.

"No! NO! I CAN DO THIS!" screamed Circe.

"You had your chance, you had your warning, now you'll have your punishment," said Hel.

"Punishment?" said Circe weakly.

"Considering your experimentation with flesh-shaping kept you occupied too much, I think it would be appropriate to see how well you'll look in different forms of your own," said Hel. The pair of bone golems standing guard grabbed Circe's arms at that. "Don't worry, we'll return you to your default form...eventually."

Circe looked terrified at that "No...nononononono!" she gibbered before screaming as she was dragged away.

Once she was gone, Malaki staggered in. "You wanted to see me?" he groaned.

"Yes, I understand that you fared even more poorly than you did last time," said Hel.

"Don't remind me," groaned Malaki.

"How exactly were you sent back so expressly?" asked Hel.

"They blew me up," said Malaki glumly.

"And you didn't see it coming?" asked Hel.

"I opened the door and woke up here," said Malaki.

"Such a waste," said Hel, "Are you feeling better now?"

"Yes...next time I tear his stupid head off," snapped Malaki.

"You'll have the chance soon," said Hel, "The new moon is in two days and knowing Fenris, that's when our window of opportunity closes."

"Fine...as long as I get a shot," snapped Malaki.

"Good, get ready to leave as soon as you can," said Hel, "This one is not slipping away without a fight."

"Yes, ma'am," said Malaki, leaving before a new shape detached.

"You seem to need a...reminder of the deal," said Mr. Black, making a calm motion and sending Hel's guards through a wall, before straightening his tie.

"I have been abiding by our agreement," said Hel flatly, "I specifically told my servant she was not to kill the off-worlders. I made her stay her hand from the worst she could inflict on your precious half-breeds."

"She did worse...she damaged them just when they will begin to be needed," said Mr. Black, calmly, making another gesture as a guard got back up, said guard twitching among a dozen crunches as every bone in its body shattered.

"If you mean the anti-magic, it was not a lethal or crippling amount," said Hel, "If they're strong, they'll recover in a month's time at most."

"You know perfectly well their abilities come from technology," said Cydra, shimmering into view.

Hel gave Cydra a scornful look and said, "Your kind is not welcome here."

"Try and stop us...or should we get the tentacle guy? You know he doesn't like to be dragged from his poker," sneered Cydra.

"The point being that my agent was unaware of the source of their abilities and she was explicitly told not to kill them," said Hel, "I believe that holds in line with our accord."

"Not exactly...but close enough. Be aware that the old accord is watching you very closely now...and next time...we will hold you directly responsible," said Mr. Black darkly.

* * *

><p>There's another chapter up. It's a bit late due to some technical difficulty I've been having with lately. Anyways, with this chapter, we see the return of Circe who had caused trouble for the gang before. Will we see her again after this? What exactly are the long-term ramifications of her actions? Well, it's hard to determine these questions at the moment, but one thing that is certain is that the next chapter will most likely be the last wolfstone chapter. It ought to be up in less than two weeks. Keep an eye out for it and please review.<p>

15. Death Challenge

****Voyagers Saga****

****Broken Nest****

****Chapter 15: Death Challenge****

With the new moon coming and the gang's best chance of removing the wolfstone amulet from Astrid's neck approaching, they were expecting Hel to send someone to give them more trouble. They were not disappointed.

It was just as well that, given the Lynches were having...nanite trouble, they'd fallen back on an old favorite in times such as these...overkill. That said, Hel had apparently not been pulling stops given this was the 6th attack in the two days.

"Fenris, how uberpowerful are these amulets?" asked Matt, cleaning some demon goo off his rifle.

"Alone, not balance-tipping powerful. But Hel only needs one to start building an unstoppable army of her own," said Fenris.

"Fine, sooner it's off, the sooner we fire it into the sun or something," said Matt angrily.

"I shall take possession of it afterwards," said Fenris, "It wouldn't be the first time I've added a wolfstone set in some artifact to my horde."

"Erm...I should point out that keeping stuff in what is basically a treasure room probably started this mess in the first place. We humans tend to nick anything shiny that isn't nailed down and doesn't appear to have an owner," said Matt warningly.

"I have to keep them near me when I hibernate," said Fenris, "Taking one would be enough to wake me up and you know how much trouble just one can make."

"Then how did that stone end up with that trader?" said Matt pointedly.

"The stones ended up scattered over Midgard after the Wolf War," said Fenris, "Fortunately, I think there are only a handful left to be found."

"What I mean is...kinda proves that your wake up call's useless. We're offering to take them OFF the planet. By the time humanity's got space travel, they won't even remember them," said Matt calmly.

Fenris growled angrily at that. "Don't think he quite trusts anyone with them," said Chloe.

"Then you leave the planet. Falling asleep is not the only option. You could go to Asgard...or take one of the shuttles. Nullspace needs heroes," said Matt, ignoring Chloe.

"But the remaining wolfstones..." protested Fenris.

"We can sweep over the globe for the last ones once Astrid's finished with hers," said Matt, "It'll be a lot faster than just sleeping until one unearths, not to mention a lot more efficient. What if one is unearthed in America? By the time you get there, they'll be hundreds of them."

"With a little help, they'd be all gathered up long before Hel realizes what you're up to," said Chloe, "And what will you do with them afterwards?"

Fenris paused at that, "I...I don't know."

"Just as I thought," said Matt, "Standard procedure with disposing of magical artifacts is to drop them in a volcano, but they just might end up at the wrong place here."

"Yeah..." said Techo gloomily, "Look, I dunno how much more of these raids we can take. Can we get the damn thing removed?"

"It should be able to be removed by midnight, when the new moon is at its zenith," said Fenris.

"Great...what's the catch and how will we tell the moon's at zenith?" she asked.

"Oh, it'll be easy to tell when the moon's moving into its zenith when the ritual's set up," said Fenris, "The worst problems would be if Hel's forces attacked just before then and if Astrid's subconscious harbors enough want for the power to resist the ritual."

"Joy...what else? There is ALWAYS a bigger catch," said Chloe gloomily.

"If the ritual is disrupted or fails, it could cause the wolfstone's to be completely unleashed and make Astrid a wolf permanently," said Fenris.

"That's one hell of a catch," said Matt weakly.

"Which is why I suggest that the next time Hel sends someone, send them back with a strong enough message to stop her assaults," said Fenris.

"Gotcha, overwhelming firepower," said Matt cheerfully before noticing Fenrir putting his disguise cloak on.

"Come...I will need to set up in Berk."

"Why can't we just do it here?" asked Techo.

"Because the wolf's home is in the forest and it would be more receptive to come out if called there. Besides, the presence of the other wolfstones could disrupt the ritual."

"Great, the forest worked so well last time," said Matt sarcastically.

"Which is why you are to come and make sure nothing disturbs me as I set up the ritual place," said Fenris.

"Fine, fine," said Matt, earning a slap from Chloe.

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Sometime later, the group was looking for an appropriate clearing in the forest to do the ritual in. It didn't help that Fenris was rather picky.

"Now look, if you say 'wrong skyline' ONCE MORE, you're back in the kennel!" snapped Chloe.

"What makes you think you can send me back?" snapped Fenris. Several spiderbots appeared at that.

"Hey, about this one?" asked Techo, pointing. Fenrir walked into the clearing and looked around.

"Hmm, spacious enough, a clear view of the sky, those large rocks won't be in the way, and what's this?" Fenris knelt down to a ground where a large ashy circle, which unknown to the group was made by a Typhoomerang earlier that day, was in the grass. "Hmm, it doesn't appear to be made by magic and it seems to have cleansed this ground. But what could have made it?"

"Who cares? Let's just get this craziness done!" snapped Techo.

"Yes, this area seems to be a fine location," said Fenris.

"That it is, for you to meet your end," said a voice among the trees.

Matt sighed at that. "Malaki? How many times do I have to fillet you before you get the point? Striker rifle," he said, a trooper tossing him a bulky-looking weapon.

"Could you please not fight here?" asked Fenris, "The radiation that weapon could release might spoil this area for the ritual."

"It's not a laser," said Matt, aiming at the tree that Malaki's voice had come from the top of, firing and blasting part of the trunk to splinters and causing the tree to tip over.

"You'll have to do better than that to catch me," said Malaki's voice from another direction. Matt spun and fired again, another tree collapsing and a cloud of terrible terrors taking off. "You're as subtle as a plummeting yak," taunted Malaki's voice, "Come and face me since you obviously can't shoot me." Matt snapped at that, firing rapidly at the tree's until the clearly was several times larger.

Matt wasn't the only one who had just lost patience. "Lynch, you're making a mess and it's making my job all the more difficult!" snapped Fenris, "And since you're not succeeding with your marksmanship, I am telling you to leave and face Malaki somewhere else."

"Now look..." began Matt before a kick caught him and he was sent flying into the treeline.

Fenris glanced at the troopers and said dryly, "I suppose I'll have to pay a penalty for removing your captain."

"Only if the captain says so," said one of them.

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Malaki laughed himself almost sick as Matt was sent flying. "This is going to be more enjoyable than I thought," said Malaki, "If that fool is that easily misdirected without his dragon powers, he won't stand a chance against me."

A second later, a blast shot through the branch he was on, sending him plummeting. Of course, being an elf, it was simple for him to land on his feet. "Oh, I see you've finally caught up with me," he said in a dismissive tone. A second later, he was hopping around, yelping as rounds blew small craters in the dirt.

"Is that really sporting?" asked Malaki, "I didn't bring my own ranged weapons."

"Tough," said Matt, firing again.

"Fine, if you'd rather play unfairly..." said Malaki before tossing several throwing knives at Matt.

Matt held up his rifle, the daggers digging into it before he smirked. "Ok...catch," he said, tossing the gun into Malaki's hands...where it overloaded violently.

Matt dusted off his hands and said, "And that takes care of that."

"Not so fast, mortal," said a voice from the other side of the fire.

Matt shrugged, instead saying, "Ok, bring it on," drawing his ion blade.

Malaki appeared in front of Matt, looking a little bit scorched. He looked at Matt's weapon and laughed. "Do you really think you can defeat an elf in a swordfight?" he asked as he drew his own sword. Matt shrugged before making a slashing motion with his ion blade, the top half of Malaki's sword falling off. Malaki blinked before saying, "I didn't see that coming."

Matt smirked before making another slash at head height at Malaki. However, Malaki's reflexes were sharper than that and he narrowly dodged that attack. But then Matt made a slash at his legs that were more on target and left Malaki on the ground. Matt stood over Malaki and said, "You know, I'm pretty sick of you and all those other creeps coming up and making my day miserable. So go tell your boss that if she really wants that stone, she can stop sending mooks and come get it herself."

There was a rumble of thunder at that, an ominous female laugh coming from everywhere at once. Malaki was staring up at Matt with a

dumbstruck look. "Do you actually mean that? That's not just empty boasting?" he asked with a voice that seemed somewhere between awestruck and hopeful.

"Hell yeah. If your boss is anything like you, she's easy pickings. Deliver the message when you respawn," said Matt, stabbing down. Rather unnervingly, Malaki just laughed until he started choking on his own blood and that didn't last too long. Matt shrugged as Malaki vanished like smoke. "Idiot," he muttered, walking back to the clearing.

Fenris looked up as he came back, "I noticed the thunder earlier. I assume you've taken care of Malaki, but what caused that?"

"Nothing, probably him trying to unnerve me when I said he was a joke," said Matt.

"I hope you've sent a strong enough message when you dispatched him to discourage any more attacks," said Fenris.

"Told him to send his boss the next time," sneered Matt

Chloe and the troopers laughed at that. "Ha, that'd probably send us a lot of trouble, wouldn't it, Fenris? Fenris?" asked Chloe, noticing he wasn't joining in.

"You have no idea," said Fenris darkly.

"You're expecting her to keep sending more, aren't you?" asked Matt dully.

"No...not now you have invited her personally," said Fenris in a snarl.

"Well, she wouldn't take it seriously," said Matt, "I mean, it was more about rubbing her minions' losses in her face. I mean, she isn't even able to come here, right?"

"No, she cannot...unless she is invited," said Fenris coldly.

"But I'm certain the other gods in Asgard would object about her coming up here, won't they?" asked Matt.

"They might, but then again..." said Fenris before reaching out and grabbing Matt's left arm and twisting until he could see the back of his metal hand, which now had a marking on it that resembled an arrow.

"That's new," said Matt weakly.

"That is the mark of Tyr, the one-handed god of justice. It appears that he's taken personal interest in this and will be officiating this battle," said Fenris.

"I'm sorry, what?" said Matt.

"It means that Tyr will be coming to watch over the challenge of combat you've just given to the Queen of the Underworld!" yelled Fenris.

"What? I didn't challenge her. I just taunted her choice of mini-urk" yelled Matt before Chloe's hands closed around his throat.

"YOU CHALLENGED THE ASGARDIAN GODDESS OF DEATH TO A FIGHT?!" yelled Chloe as she throttled Matt.

"Technically, she isn't really Asgardian," said Fenris, "Her parents are Loki of Jotunheim and Angriboda the giantess, so she's actually the Jotun goddess of death." Chloe's eyes literally went red at that, causing Fenris to whine and back up. "Erm...carry on," he said, Chloe nodding and continuing to choke Matt

One of the troopers commented, "Maybe if she kills him, it'll cancel the challenge."

"Goddess of death, mate," said another, "It'll just be a forfeit."

A second later, several clouds began to form. "Inciming!" called a trooper as a beam of light shot down.

Everyone jumped back as the beam of light just happened to touch down in the middle of the burnt grass that Fenris had been examining earlier. After a moment, the bright shower of rainbow colors faded to reveal a tall man in the middle of an altered burned area. He was heavily armored and wore a helmet with wings on the side that obscured most of his features. There was a large sword in a scabbard on his back. A quite noticeable feature was that on the end of his left arm was a gold-ringed socket that had been inset with several runes. "I am Tyr, God of Justice," boomed the man with a deep melodic voice.

Matt's men reacted as anyone would expect: they opened fire, their shots ricocheting off the Asgardian's armor before he said calmly, "Are you finished?"

"Tyr, it's been too long," said Fenris.

"So it has, Wolf Warrior," said Tyr, "I hope you haven't been causing too much trouble and biting too many hands."

"I thought we'd never speak of that again," said Fenris with a sigh.

"Just making sure your memory is still strong," said Tyr before turning towards Matt, "So you are the one who laid down the challenge. It seems we have much in common."

"If I said I was being a smartarse and didn't mean it, does that invalidate the challenge?" asked Matt nervously.

"It's too late for that," said Tyr, "But as you were the one who made the challenge, it is up to you to decide the rules."

"Easy, no superpowers for the evil goddess lady," said Matt quickly.

"Fine, but only so far," said Tyr, "Justice is about balance. This must be a fair fight for both sides."

"Bullcrap! Even if my powers weren't on the blink, she'd still be

able to twist me up like a pretzel without her powers!" snapped Matt.

"They are? Well, we'll have to do something about that," said Tyr.

"Erm...what?" said Chloe, confused.

Tyr removed a sizeable drinking horn from his pouch and looked at it thoughtfully. "On second thought, this might be a bit too potent for you," he said, "Does anyone have a water flask or is there a source of fresh water nearby?" A trooper indicated nervously that he had a water flask, tossing it over. "Thank you," said Tyr as he opened up his drinking horn, allowing bright light to shine out. He carefully allowed a single golden drop to drip into the water flask which soon started glowing itself. He handed the flask to Matt and instructed, "You must drink every drop."

Matt shrugged, before downing it. "Ok...what's this WOTHISSTUFFSGOTAKICK!" he said, twitching and yelling the rest, causing everyone to jump back.

"What is that stuff?" asked Chloe.

"It's the Mead of Strength, derived from the Mead of Poetry," said Tyr, "I doubt you mortals have anything equal to it. Though I understand the Olympians have something like it by the name of nectar."

"You just gave someone with a psycho split personality super juice?" said Wilson carefully.

"Very diluted super juice," said Tyr, "Just enough to make sure he's at full strength."

"This will end badly," said Chloe icily, Fenris actually nodding.

"His initial high will wear off in three minutes if his metabolism's good. And after he sleeps it off, he'll be at proper fighting strength to confront Hel," said Tyr.

Chloe shrugged, punching Mat on the jaw and felling him like a tree causing everyone to jump. "There, now he can sleep," she said, darkly, proving that her temper was at breaking point.

"Very well, I assume you'd rather do your battle in a place where innocents will not be harmed," said Tyr.

"Sure, but I doubt there's anywhere..." began Chloe before realizing Tyr seemed to have said that to the sky.

"This battle is to be over the girl, is it not?" asked Tyr.

"Yes..." said Chloe warningly.

"Then she ought to be here as well," said Tyr, "You may wish to gather the witnesses who matter to this challenge quickly."

Chris glared at that, realizing what Tyr had in mind. "Don't even

think-" he began before a beam of light shot down, engulfing the Lynches, Techo, Fenris and Astrid before vanishing. "Oh shit," he finished.

They were definitely no longer on Berk since they were now a dusty plain that stretched everywhere. And they were very clearly no long on Earth considering there was a somewhat pear-shaped moon visible on the edge of the lilac-colored sky.

Matt chose that moment to wake up. "Oh, my head..." he groaned before seeing the moon. "Bloody Constructicons," he muttered.

"Good, you're awake," said Tyr, "Now, we must start working on preparing the challenge between you and Hel. Usually, these challenges include three competitions but I suppose you can do just one if you're feeling lucky."

"How generous," said Matt dryly.

"Of course, you'll be wanting to the traditional hand-to-hand combat competition," said Tyr.

"Erm...sure?" said Matt before jumping back as an axe as big as he was landed at his feet.

"How about we get some practice in before the fight?" asked Tyr.

"That's the type of weapon I'm supposed to fight with?" asked Matt, staring at the big axe.

"No, that's the type of weapon you'll have to defend against," said Tyr before pausing and muttering, "Or does Hel prefer to use the flail?"

Matt blinked before turning and running for it...before running back in from the opposite direction and swearing loudly.

"Let me guess, he can't leave the area that the challenge is gonna take place in," said Chloe.

"Indeed it does," said Fenris with a smug tone.

"Of course, the areas he's allowed to go to can expand depending on what he picks for his other two competitions," said Tyr.

"I thought he was doing just the one." said Techo

"With his fighting prowess, he'll need all the extra competitions he can get," said Fenris.

"More chance he dies," said Chloe sarcastically.

A frustrated grunting soon caught they're attention and they turned to see Matt struggling to lift the big axe Tyr had dropped. "Now, you must learn its weight, balance. You will need to avoid such blows," said Tyr, Matt whimpering before falling over with a clanging noise.

"Like I said, he'll need all the extra chances he can get," said

Fenris.

"What about intelligence for one idea?" suggested Techo.

"It is not easy to outwit death," said Fenris.

"It worked the last time," said Matt, causing everyone to look at him.

"You'll have to do something complex enough for her to agree to," said Fenris.

"Sure, we just need a jump coil," said Matt cheerfully.

Tyr and Fenris exchanged a look before laughing. "A jump coil?" asked Tyr, "Are you void-walkers still that far behind?"

Matt blinked at that. "Wait...you know how they work?" he said blankly.

"We use much more complicated technology. The Bifrost is our primary means of reaching other realms, but our ships are capable of making the jump on their own, but not nearly as instantaneous," said Tyr, "If you're going to try to baffle Hel, it will have to be with better technology than that."

"Erm...well, shit," said Techo, summing things up nice and neatly.

"I think you can at least put some effort into a competition that would be actually challenging," said Fenris, "Like some form of race."

"A race? With what? Then again, she probably isn't athletic, the fat ass...and she's right behind me, isn't she?" said Matt, his voice turning dark as he saw the horrified looks.

"Not quite yet, but if you hurry and say something nice, you might be able to backtrack that statement," said Chloe.

Matt looked behind him to see a flaming black circle was burning on the ground and a figure was slowly rising from it. Or it seemed that she was slowly rising but it was really because she was so tall. Hel stood about 11 feet high, not counting the impressive horns attached to her helm. She wore a close-fitting green black armor on most of her body, though it showed off a lot of her legs. However, she was rather attractive if overwhelmingly tall, but the exposed skin of her legs was a sickly grey as compared to the healthy color of her upper body.

Matt just stared before his eyes rolled into his head and he fell backwards. Hel sighed and said, "When he offered me a challenge, I was expecting to actually get one."

"I don't think he's seen a giant before," said Tyr.

"What about Billy and his family?" asked Astrid.

"Billy was stunted for his age and Matt didn't have to face his family in battle," said Fenris.

Hel sighed before seeming to shrink down to human size. "Better?" she taunted.

Matt had managed to wake up by then. "You know, you don't seem as nearly as bad a girl as everyone makes you out to be," said Matt, "I bet you're really sweet when it's not a matter of life and death."

"Matt, what are you doing?" asked Chloe.

"Uh, courting death?" suggested Matt.

Immediately, they heard a rimshot and everyone turned to see Morph with a set of drums and cymbals. "Hi guys," said Morph.

Hel and Tyr looked surprised, Hel complaining, "You brought a gelatinous cube here?"

"Morph, how did you get here?" asked Matt, sounding like he was about to lose his last shred of self-composure.

"I just tagged along," said Morph, "Good thing too or else I'd miss out on the action."

Matt stopped at that, considering naming Morph as an endurance challenge before remembering that would violate every law against war crimes across the multiverse...plus he'd probably go nuts.

"Now then, I suppose we're going to fight each other now," said Hel.

Matt looked confused, drawing his ion blade and saying "Put em up?" before he was sent flying by a blow from a warhammer

"Hel, you should know there are some rules involved," said Tyr.

"There's only one rule that's important: he falls, I win," said Hel.

"This is an officiated challenge," said Tyr, "As the God of Justice, I am to make sure both sides are playing fairly. Or would you rather incur the ire of the Allfather?"

Hel glared before looking at where Matt had been embedded. "Fine," she said simply, her warhammer vanishing.

"Now then, you're both to fight with equal strength. Hel, you may not use your powers as a Death God, only that of a giantess. Matt, the use of your firearms is forbidden. Have I made myself clear?" said Tyr.

"But she's bulletproof," complained Matt.

"Your firearms don't just shoot bullets, do they?" said Tyr.

"I doubt they have Chuck Norris bullets," snapped Matt.

"Melee only," said Tyr sternly.

Matt glared, drawing his ion blade. "Fine," he said, turning in time for Hel to lunge at him. Matt yelped before barely jumping backwards in time to avoid being driven into the ground like a stake. Chloe and the others watched with embarrassed silence as Matt ran away screaming, keeping just ahead of becoming the human rivet thanks to Hel's hammer.

"He knows he can't win unless he fights back, right?" asked Astrid.

"Yeah, but we already expect this round to go to Hel," said Techo.

Morph, to his credit was cheering Matt on, even when there was a worrying 'crack' and Matt sailed overhead like the world's most dangerous golf ball.

"How long do you think before Matt realizes he can still use his dragon powers?" asked Chris.

Techo had wandered over to where Matt was embedded at the business end of a trench, lifting a limp arm before dropping it. "Moot point, I think he's lost," he called, a faint groan emitted.

Tyr turned to Hel and said, "You were not supposed to use lethal force."

"I'm the Goddess of Death, it's to be expected," said Hel.

"Revive him now," ordered Tyr.

Hel sighed, waving a hand and Matt appearing, looking confused at the same time the him in the trench vanished, causing Techo to yelp. Hel shrugged before bringing her fist down on his head, knocking him out. "I win," she said casually.

"The next challenge will begin as soon as the other combatant recovers," said Tyr.

Hel smirked at that. "That's the race, I believe...and that means that I choose the conditions. When he comes round, give him some of this," she said, calling what looked like an ale bottle into existence. Hel strode away, a bone of thrones rose to meet her. She sat down on it before pulling a compact mirror out of her pouch and applying what was probably not just white powder to her face.

Chloe glared before snapping, "Can't you bugger off?"

Tyr looked at the bottle and said, "Believe it or not, this elixir would be beneficial, provided that Matt is awake when he drinks it."

Chloe snapped, "No time for that!" opening Matt's mouth and pouring the bottles contents down his gullet.

"Well, this might be spectacular," said Tyr, taking several paces back.

Chloe shrugged, sniffing the drink. "Smells like booze, I could use a

shot," she said, taking a swig before Fenris, who had also cottoned on, could stop her.

"Oh dear," he said slowly

"Er, this is something we ought to be worried about, isn't it?" asked Astrid.

"Probably would be smart to get out of fallout range," said Techo.

"Fallout?" said Chloe, before twitching, "Oh no...that wasn't alcohol, was it?"

"Not the kind that is meant for revelry," said Tyr.

"What was it?" snapped Chloe angrily.

"Essence of Night Fury," said Tyr flatly, causing Chloe to grab her throat and start gagging.

"If only Kala was here to see this," said Morph as he took a seat.

A minute later, there were two new night fury siblings, the female trying to kick the other back to the land of the living "So I'm guessing there's a reason you turned Matt into a Night Fury that doesn't violate the challenge," said Astrid to Hel.

Hel shrugged before rippling, becoming a more regal version of said dragon and saying, "Because any mortal can run...why are they grinning?" glaring at Techo and Chris who were grinning like loons.

"Because we know Matt a lot better than you do," said Techo.

Hel looked confused at that before noticing with amusement that her opponent was coming round. It was always amusing...until he got up without any problem...until his sister hit him.

"So, you wish to race as dragons," said Tyr, "Have you decided the course you'll be taking?" Hel nodded, the view shimmering to a cliff, a canyon below them and mountains around them.

"Cooooooll..." said Morph before noticing there was no rock under where he was standing. "Uh oh," he said before he dropped.

"It is simple, beat me," said Hel smugly, adding "He can have 20 minutes to orientate..." she began only for Matt to charge forward and take off, smugly saying "Bye, slowpoke."

"Wha- but," started Hel before realizing he was ganging a big lead.

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Matt laughed his head off as he turned a corner. "What kind of moron..." he began before he had to turn to avoid a mountain top that nearly tore him in half. He was going easily as fast as Toothless, who could clearly outstrip anything the gang had if this speed was evidence. "Ok...gotta concentrate," he said to himself.

Still, he was pretty sure Hel wouldn't be able to keep up. She may have created the Night Furies, the idea of which creeped Matt out a little, but she probably has no idea how to really fly as one.

A plasma bolt nearly took his head off at that, proving him wrong. "Ohshit," he muttered, barely turning a tight corner.

Hel was soon almost upon him. "You're a quicker learner than you let on," she said, "But you still don't know how to fly as a dragon as well as I do."

Matt glared. "Oh shut up and fly," he snapped, spitting several blasts at the wall ahead, causing a minor rockslide.

Hel swerved aside with ease before blasting at the top of a mountain to cause a much more substantial avalanche. Matt glared, before remembering when he'd ran into a similar incident during his year's 'holiday' on Avalor, spitting rapid-fire at the larger rocks, leaving just the dirt.

"There are no bonus points to earn for wayside damage," said Hel.

"Then stop it!" called Matt, turning a hard corner, Hel turning the corner too.

"Maybe I'll keep you around? I need a replacement for Malaki," she taunted

"Nah, got too much self-esteem for the crap you put your lackeys through," said Matt.

"Shame then," said Hel calmly, before trying to snap his tail.

"Hey! You're not supposed to kill me!" yelled Matt.

"Crippling your tail wouldn't be lethal. Just ask your friend's pet," said Hel before snapping at him again. Matt glared before spotting a natural rock bridge, spitting a single blast at each end. "Your firepower is pitiful," sneered Hel.

"That's because you dunno what I did," said Matt, swooping under the bridge. Hel laughed, followed and vanished under the ricks as the bridge collapsed.

"That ought to slow her down," said Matt, "Now where's that finish line?"

The final stretch quickly came into view, but not before Hel flew into view beside him, too concentrated on making it a hat trick. Matt glared before doubling his pace, the two shooting towards the cliff where the gang were standing. The two of them were neck-to-neck, but Matt managed to pull out farther ahead at the last second as he crossed the finish line. "YES!" he crowed, "I'm number one, I'm number one, I'm-" His boasting was cut short when he realized he was coming in for a landing at way too fast a speed. "gonna feel this tomorrow," he said before he ended up digging a 50-foot furrow with his face. Chloe and the others winced as Matt's furrow ended with an ominous crash in the side of a mountain.

"Ooooh, Hel, your skills are needed again," called Tyr.

Hel landed and said, "I think he should spend a minute learning what it is like to be no longer among the living."

"Hel, the rules," snapped Tyr, Hel rolling her draconic form's eyes before flicking a wing and a human Matt reappearing, shuddering and muttering something about the bees.

"What about her?" asked Chris, pointing at Chloe.

"She should not have drunk it. She can stay like that till it wears off in 2 days," said Hel coldly, changing back.

Chloe growled angrily at Hel. "Try and attack me and I'll wither your scales," said Hel.

Matt said dizzily, "Kala...noâ€|" only to be mauled by Chloe.

"Hel..." started Tyr.

"I am the Goddess of Death, not the Goddess of Nursemaids," said Hel in an annoyed tone.

Tyr looked thoughtful before he said, "Fine, Hel is correct, your sister should not have drunk that essence." causing Matt to snap. "WHAT?"

"Well, at least Kala will have someone to talk to," said Chris only to dodge a fireball spat by Chloe.

"Ok...so what's the last test?" said Chris, annoyed before Tyr said "It's my choice."

Astrid sighed and said, "You know, I'm the one this whole challenge thing is over. Don't I get a say in it?"

"Funny you should say that. Given it IS over you, you're the one this last challenge will be over. It is simple: find you," said Tyr with a smirk, sending a bolt at Astrid that caused her to vanish.

"Where did she go?" asked Matt.

"That's what you'll have to find out before Hel does," said Tyr. Matt glared, stomping towards Tyr with claws out only to be zapped back to human. "No combat is permitted, you are not allowed to interfere with each other...and no GPS," he said, adding the last part angrily.

"So what am I supposed to rely on?" asked Matt.

"Your honed tracking skills as a bounty hunter of course," said Fenris.

"We're doomed," said Chris.

Hel had shifted back to her giantess form and she said, "This will be too easy. Death finds everyone."

"Ah, ah, no death goddess powers," said Tyr, "You must use your own skills."

Hel glared before shrinking back down, "This will be no trouble anyway. Even my natural Asgardian senses are superior to that human."

"You're not even Asgardian, no matter what your father claims," said Fenris.

"I am still superior," sneered Hel before glaring just before Tyr zapped her to wherever she was starting from.

"And how am I supposed to find Astrid?" demanded Matt.

"Do what comes natural," said Techo, tapping the side of his nose.

Matt glared before Tyr said "No dragon powers either." zapping Matt too

"Well, there goes his best chance," said Techo.

...

Matt appeared about 5 feet above an oasis before gravity dropped him into the lake. Matt surfaced with a gasp. "Urgh, bloody teleporters, at least there's no-" he began before a shark-like creature swallowed him in one gulp. However, Matt didn't stay in there too long as the creature spat him out and went 'bleagh'.

"I hate Asgardians," groaned Matt.

...

The desert was hot, dry and a general terrible place to be...but at least there was no fish things to eat Matt, he thought to his happiness.

Just then, the sand dune near him rumbled. "Oh, don't tell me..." groaned Matt before a huge sandworm burst out and roared. Matt stared as the worm leaned down to growl. "Oh boy...erm...Kwisatz Haderach?" he tried before the worm roared in his face, causing Matt to run away shrieking. The sandworm emerged completely from the ground and started pursuing him.

...

Astrid however shook her head, trying to get her own bearings before noticing it was night. Several moons were up and an uncomfortableness under her indicated she'd shifted form. "So much for my say in this," said Astrid before getting off her tail. She seemed to have ended up in some old quarry, judging from the abandoned wooden 'cranes and abandoned tools. "He couldn't have at least put me in a forest?" asked Astrid.

She looked down to see a note saying, "Apologies in advance, the teleport spell is made to send you to a random location so I cannot accidentally give hints, sincerely, Tyr."

"I suppose that's fair," said Astrid, "But I can't just wait here for Matt to show up. But then, he never said I couldn't find Matt first."

The back of the note also said, "I would advise you stay on one place. Unless it's one of the old quarries, sandworms have their nests there."

"Sandworms? What's a sandworm?" asked Astrid. A crunch was heard at that, a large sandworm as big as one of Matt's tanks appearing and looking at Astrid. "Oh, that's a sandworm," said Astrid before running away.

The sandworm let out a girly shriek before burrowing back down, a furrow shooting in the opposite direction. Astrid paused and looked back. "Huh, not as tough as the Whispering Death," she said.

The baby came back at that, a far larger version appearing, the baby making gibbering noises before pointing a tail at Astrid. "Ok, maybe it is as tough," said Astrid before heading towards the nearest crane.

...

Matt glared, walking through the desert, covered in green goo. Luckily sandworms were apparently not as invincible from the inside...sadly he'd found that out the hard way. "Why couldn't it have been in the forest?" asked Matt, "How am I supposed to find Astrid in this?"

He staggered round the corner to see Hel who was covered in even more goo and snarling. "You," she said in a low voice.

"Not having more luck than me, are you?" said Matt with a smirk.

"I swear, if it was not against the rules, I'd kill you a few times just to feel better. He HAD to choose the sandworm grounds," she hissed.

"And Astrid's probably holed up somewhere cushy," said Matt dryly.

"Huh...she's probably at the old town. We had to leave this planet. Everyone got eaten or turned into scorpion people," said Hel calmly, mutual hatred for Tyr temporarily doing the work of a team of diplomats.

"Did you say scorpion people?" asked Matt.

"Yeah, they got loose from that Ballan dump...why?" asked Hel before she remembered they should be trying to kill each other and make it look accidental.

"You're not really on my buddies list so I don't have to tell you anything," said Matt, "So I'll just leave you to the SANDWORMS WHO WOULD CLEARLY WANT A BIGGER MEAL THAN ME!" He shouted out the last part, hoping there would be sandworms listening.

Hel looked confused before she sneered "Try again. Unless we're on top of their nest, they won't try-" she began before a sandworm

glomped her.

Matt dusted off his hands and said, "Well, that ought to keep her busy for a few minutes. Now to rescue the distressing damsel." A second later, he noticed two more sandworms looking at him. "Never mind," he said, fleeing. A sandworm tail lashed at him, hitting him with enough force to send him flying.

...

Astrid glared, sitting on top of the crane as several sandworms circled below her. "Stupid Tyr, if I ever get out of this..." she muttered before hearing a scream getting closer. "Wait, is that who I think it is?" asked Astrid.

Matt shot past, somehow managing to land in the bucket hanging from the bucket. Unfortunately for him the bucket was still full of rocks. "Matt, is that you?" asked Astrid.

"Matt will be along shortly," said Matt in a dazed voice. Astrid rolled her eyes as Matt groaned. "Is that you, god?" he gibbered.

"No, despite Fenris's high opinion of his 'race'," said Astrid.

"I...feel pain...lots of pain," groaned Matt before righting himself.

"Considering how hard you landed on a bunch of rocks, I'm not that surprised," said Astrid, "So how about flying us back to the others?"

"No dragon powers," groaned Matt, righting himself in the bucket and going to look over the edge. "Erm...I wouldn't..." began Astrid before a baby sandworm chomped over Matt's head, muffled screams heard.

Astrid sighed and said, "Great, I'm stuck out in the middle of nowhere and the one guy who can save me is getting his head chewed on by a sandworm."

There was a wet popping and the worm shot past Astrid, Matt with a distant look, his head covered in green goo. "Its spit is extremely...nasty," said Matt in a haunted voice.

Astrid sighed, looking around. "We need to get rid of them," she said, glaring as Matt said "Well done, you win overstatement of the year."

"Are you useful for anything besides bait without your dragon powers?" snapped Astrid.

"Bite me, fuzzy!" snapped Matt.

"I don't eat other people's leftovers," said Astrid.

"I've done far worse!" snapped Matt.

Astrid sighed and said, "Can you do anything to get rid of these

sandworms or do I have to take care of them all by myself?"

Matt sighed before checking his wrist computer, tossing various things out. "No, no, no, no...YES!" he said, finally pulling out what looked like a ball.

"You're going to play fetch with them?" asked Astrid with disbelief.

Matt grinned. "Nope, cover your ears unless you want your brain to melt," he said, twisting half of it. Astrid had a faint idea what that could mean and she quickly covered her ears. A second later, she heard a shrieking noise even through her hands, the worms getting it worse, even the huge ones burrowing down as fast as they could.

As soon as the worms were gone, Matt clicked the orb off. "Let's get going before their, uh, whatever they use to hear stop aching," he said.

"WHAT?" called Astrid.

Matt sighed and simply pointed away towards the horizon, indicating that they should get going. "I wonder what happened to Hel?" said Matt thoughtfully.

...

Hel staggered through the desert. "I...hate sandworms," she muttered. It was at this point that Hel was wondering whether this girl was worth all this trouble. But one thing was for certain, she'll be personally collecting Lynch's soul.

"When I get my hands on him, I will take much joy in-GO AWAY!" she said snapping the last part as a sandworm that reared up. Her shout had enough force in it to make the sandworm change its mind and burrow back down into the ground.

She continued to stalk along before seeing two figures on the horizon. "Finally...PEOPLE!" she snapped. She marched forward quickly, intending to wring out information about where her prize was.

After a few minutes her hearing began to hear two familiar voices. "For the last time, it wasn't an amplified version of my singing," snapped one voice.

"From your sister's description, it could have easily been that," said the other.

"YOU!" snapped Hel, losing it finally and causing them to turn. "Oh look, it's the one who LOST!" taunted Matt.

This was clearly the last straw for Hel who rose up to her full height. "DEATH WILL NOT BE DENIED!" she shouted before conjuring up her warhammer.

"Hey...don't you dare, you-" began Matt before he was sent flying first class on air hammertime.

Hel turned to Astrid and said, "You're coming with me."

"Not a chance," said Astrid before running.

"GET BACK HERE!" Hel yelled, giving chase.

...

Meanwhile, Tyr and the others were watching via a portal. "Didn't take her long to cheat," said Tyr calmly. Chloe growled and bared her fangs. "If you try to bite me, you'll be losing more teeth than you can grow back before that elixir wears off," said Tyr.

"You did dump her brother in a pit of giant man-eating sandworm things," pointed out Techo.

"Which reminds me, they'll be resurfacing soon," said Tyr, "A sandworm's stomach influences it more than its ears."

"They have ears?" asked Chris.

Techo sighed, "Look...maybe you should just, say...move them somewhere else? How the hell did sandworms get there anyway?"

"I believed it had something to do with a cross-dimensional rift and that a race called the Hygorpions were involved," said Tyr.

Chloe yelped at that and Techo screamed and dived behind a rock. "You made sure they were dead, right? You did eradicate them without an ounce of mercy?" said Chris urgently.

"Oh yes, every last one that came through. That was a difficult battle," said Tyr.

"Are you sure?" said Chris in a 'talking to Morph' mock cheerful voice.

"Absolutely," said Tyr, "Not a single one left. We scoured the desert, but the sandworms always have some nest in an inaccessible part."

"Matt within 40 miles, he's gonna find one," said Techo flatly, Tyr and Fenris both about to object before Techo snapped "WE KNOW HOW OUR LIFE WORKS, OK?"

"Well, if any of them do surface, they won't last long with Hel on the rampage," said Tyr.

"She nearly got eaten 3 times," said Techo pointedly.

"That was when she wasn't using her death goddess powers and you're about to see what happens when she's using them," said Tyr, turning back to the portal.

...

Astrid ran round some rocks and ducked down as Hel stomped by, albeit a little gloomily as she realized she'd just completely stuffed her chances of winning by playing golf with Matt. "Come out, little pup," called Hel, "There's no point in running now. I will find you and if I can't have you, I'll make sure no one can."

Astrid glared, part of her, possibly the gem's side, supplying plenty of reasons why sticking her axe into Hel's spine was a fantastic idea. Just then the ground rumbled as something came digging through it. "Oh no, not again," groaned Astrid.

This time, the ground gave way, dropping Astrid into a tunnel that was lined with an oil-like substance. "Ew...as if the sandworms themselves were bad enough, now I'm in their tunnels," said Astrid.

Part of her pointed out that this tunnel was far too narrow for some of the sandworms but was quashed as she was reminded that Hel was still above ground. "Ok, I'll just find another exit to this place, hopefully far enough from where she is, then find Matt," Astrid said to herself.

A voice, sounding like it was being made by something bashing sticks together, said "Who said you were leaving?"

"Who said that?" asked Astrid, "I though no one lived out here but sandworms."

"Who did you think owns them?" said the voice before a blue blast of energy shot out from the shadows.

Astrid easily dodged the blast and said, "You probably don't have many friends then."

An insectoid humanoid came into view at that, clacking angrily. "Yeah, people wouldn't want to hang out with an overgrown beetle," said Astrid.

"Beetle?" hissed the figure, a scorpion tail coming into view.

"Oh, a scorpion, even less desirable for a friend," said Astrid.

"Join the club," hissed the creature as several more came into view.

"That wasn't just a figure of speech, was it?" asked Astrid. There were several shrieks before one lunged at Astrid and was flipped into his fellow. "I already have enough problems with this wolfstone," said Astrid, "Becoming a scorpion has absolutely no appeal for me."

The scorpions paused at that before their hissing got angrier. "Destroyer." hissed one. Another hissed "Murderer." before one said "Food." which seemed to meet with general approval

"Gone," said Astrid before turning and running. The Hysgorpions all roared before giving chase.

...

Matt looked down at the hole, wrinkling his nose. The smell was sadly familiar. "Ah great...scorpion people," he said gloomily. He supposed it could be just an odd coincidence. After all, there are probably some places in the multiverse where arachnids had involved into a

sentient being and not just spiders.

He paused at that, realizing he'd probably just confirmed it. "Crap...I hate fate," he muttered, looking through his wrist comp and pulling out a weapon he'd nabbed from NYC base before they'd had to flee. "Down the hatch," he said, hopping down...and landing on someone in the dark.

"Oops, pardon me, didn't quite see where I was landing," said Matt.

"Urgh...get off me please...you're crushing my stinger," said a rasping voice.

Matt, who had hit his head on landing didn't pick up too much on this and got up. "Ok...don't have a cow, man."

"I've just had a rough day, not much to eat," said the other guy.

"Yeah...say, I thought Tyr said I had to do this alone," said Matt, spotting the tone of a fellow guy who was fate's target of doom.

"Tyr? That guy's a jerk. We land on this planet and he things we all have to be wiped out," whined the other fellow.

Matt nodded before that comment filtered through into his mind. "Wait, what?" he said, turning on his light.

The illumination gave Matt a clear view of the other fellow's exoskeleton, pincers, and stinger tail. Matt stared for a few seconds before his train of thought arrived at its stop, his survival instinct got off, and started hammering against the inside of Matt's skull. "Hm" said Matt politely before he raised his pistol and shot the Hysgorpion in the face, screaming incoherently.

As soon as the Hysgorpion was dead, Matt said to it, "The Fates hate me more than you. That's why they had me meet you or something. Now to find my furry friend."

...

Matt staggered around, ducking back as two Hysgorpions ran past. "I thought I'd seen the last of these guys," he muttered. He paused a moment before saying to himself, "When have I truly seen the last of anything?" Fortunately for him, Matt could come up with a few comforting things. "Ok, once this dumb challenge's over, we're gearing up for desert-wide extermination," he said.

He turned the corner to see several Hysgorpions talking. "The wolf warrior is trapped. We will send her empty skull back to this 'Allfather' as a lesson," one hissed.

"But what if they send more warriors to hunt us down?" asked another.

"We will leave no witnesses. They will presume our sandworms killed her," hissed a third.

"We are going to eat her flesh, aren't we?" asked a fourth, "I'm starving."

Matt glared before tossing a disc grenade down the hole towards them...a knockout gas one. He hoped it'd work.

A hissing was soon heard and one of the Hysgorpions said, "PU, who let one rip?"

"He who smelt it dealt it," said another.

There was a second before one of the Hysgorpions made the sort of snorting noise someone makes when they are holding down a laugh, one of his fellows doing the same before it became several rasping chuckles. "Did NegaMorph switch my knockout gas for laughing gas again?" asked Matt.

He peered out to see the Hysgorpions laughing their heads off before he walked out, one of them turning to look at him. "Hey look, a monkey," said the Hysgorpion before giggling.

Matt shrugged before slowly walking past them as they all laughed at him before he shrugged. "Worth a try...say, where's the wolf warrior?" he asked.

"In there, but you don't wanna go in, she's taking a nap," said a Hysgorpion before rolling over with laughter.

Matt shrugged before walking past them and peering in. Astrid was lying on a cot, her breathing rapid though her eyes looks clouded. Matt could see plenty of angry red welts poking through her fur.

Matt carefully approached her at that, readying a nanite shot before, as he reached close, he got grabbed round the throat by her. "Friendly," he managed to rasp, "Astrid, this is a bad time to take out your aggression against me."

Astrid however had a distant look before she tossed Matt back, though not before he gave her a nanite shot. "Ouch, you finished yet?" asked Matt.

"Get away!" snapped Astrid, snarling and lunging at Matt.

"Astrid, calm down already," snapped Matt as he tried to keep Astrid's claws from his throat. Astrid's reply was to dig her teeth into his shoulder before she received two boots to the chestplate. Matt winced a bit from the bite before saying, "Young lady, we're getting her out of here one of two ways: either you help me fight our way out or I knock you out and use you as a bludgeon."

Astrid however was staggering back as the nanites finally managed to repair the damage the poison had caused. The welts on her skin started to fade as her eyes became less clouded. "Ugh, that was nasty," she said.

"Hysgorpions, I guess the mutation was only cause of that armor thing," said Matt.

"Yeah, sorry I attacked you, I thought you were one of them," said

Astrid.

Matt nodded, peering out to see the Hysgorpions were gone. "Ok, think the hole's back this way," he said carefully.

"Are you certain?" asked Astrid doubtfully.

"No...but you wanna stay here?" said Matt quietly.

"Not at all," said Astrid.

"Then let's go." said Matt, turning around to see several Hysgorpions. "Erm...hi," said Matt carefully before the lead one screamed "KILL HIM!" Matt fired several blasts before he and Astrid ran for it.

...

Meanwhile Tyr was leading the group through the desert. After Both Matt and Hel had vanished, Chloe had insisted they go find them after she made them change her back.

"Their challenge is over anyways," said Chloe, "Hel's disqualified, Matt's won."

Tyr nodded carefully as they headed through the desert before Fenris paused. "Do...do you smell that?" he said, sniffing.

Techo sniffed and said, "I'm guessing it's something beyond the scope of my sense of smell."

"Tyr, are you CERTAIN that the creatures all died?" Fenris said.

"We've combed this desert from side to side," said Tyr.

"Have you actually dug under the sand?" asked Chloe.

Tyr shook his head. "We saw no reason to. The sandworms attack anything that enters their tunnels," he said.

"So there are probably several nests beneath the sand," said Chloe dryly.

"Most likely," said Fenris flatly.

"And knowing Matt, he and Astrid are deep in one and are being chased by Hysgorpions right now," said Chris.

"We'll just follow the explosions," said Chloe simply.

"Hel's absence is beginning to worry me," said Tyr, "If she has found her way into the nests, your friends will have a harder chance of getting out alive."

"Will they try to eat her too?" said Techo hopefully.

"To their own peril," said Tyr.

"Who cares?" said Techo happily.

...

Matt and Astrid skidded around a corner, several Hysgorpions in pursuit. "RUN AWAY!" Matt screamed.

"Where to?" asked Astrid.

"Away from them?" snapped Matt in a sarcastic voice

"There isn't any real 'away from them' direction," said Astrid, pointing to where there were several Hysgorpions up ahead.

Matt glared, clicking a button on his pistol and firing a shot at some that caused an explosion. "Just run." he snapped, turning a corner and skidding to a stop, Hel blocking the tunnel

"It's about time you appeared," said Hel, "I have been having a very bad day."

"Boo hoo, I'll let you know when I start to care," said Matt before a rumbling was heard and a sandworm burst from the ceiling.

Hel glared, sending a blast into the worm, causing it to shudder and turn to dust. "Right, now hand over the wolf warrior," said Hel angrily.

"I think I'll stick with 'no'," said Matt.

"Fine, time to die," said Hel, before yelping as several Hysgorpions came into view and decided Hel was the threat.

"Ok, them first," said Matt, pointing back at the Hysgorpions before pulling Astrid out of the way.

However, Astrid was having none of that. "I am tired of this witch always breathing down my neck and sending all her minions at me. I am tired of having others pick out what I'm supposed to do. I'm making my own choices and I choose to make her regret ever coming after me in the first place!" she snapped before charging at Hel.

Matt yelped as Astrid went for Hel with her axe, actually landing a blow that surprised her more than hurt her. "You dare to strike the- Ow! You dare to strike- Ow! You dare to- OW! STOP IT!" snapped He as Astrid kept hacking at her.

"Try and stop me," said Astrid.

Hel took a deep breath before exhaling a thick cloud of green gas. Astrid quickly scrambled away from it, but it kept coming. Matt yelped as a Hysgorpion, dazed, blundered into the gas and was literally reduced to brittle bones. "Killer garlic breath!" he yelped

The Hysgorpions backed away, but Astrid had already got an idea. "I'm sorry. Where you aiming at me? I've seen Hideous Zipplebacks aim their gas better than you can," said Astrid as she angled herself towards the Hysgorpions, "But then again, they can let out a lot of gas. You, that was just a little puff. Are you sure you weren't actually burping?"

Hel glared, sending a blast of her 'death smog' out at Astrid, who jumped aside as the smog hit the Hysgorpions in the face. There was a horrible death rattle as the Hysgorpions crumbled to death's power. As soon as the cloud dissipated, Matt said to Hel, "You should go into the extermination business. You're really good at fumigation."

Hel glared before sending the duo flying with a shockwave. "ENOUGH! YOU...WILL...DIE!" she snapped, readying her warhammer, only for it to freeze in place.

"You have claimed all the mortals you will be taking this day," said Tyr as he appeared.

"No, I don't care if it's cheating! I have to kill that little parasite!" snapped Hel, glaring at Matt.

"Technically, you did kill him, twice," pointed out Chris.

"And you made me revive him. I DEMAND VENGEANCE FOR HIS DISRESPECT!" snapped Hel.

Tyr seemed smug under his helmet, "There are those who would object to your taking his life out of turn."

"If the Allfather wants him back, he'll have to come to me himself to get him," snapped Hel.

"Not him..." said Tyr pointedly, causing Hel to pause.

"Besides, do you really want his soul floating around your realm for all eternity?" pointed out Chloe.

Hel glared at Matt who grinned in an annoying way before she snorted and opened a portal back to her realm. "Fine, you win. He's not worth the migraine."

"Not yet," said Tyr pointedly.

"What now?" snapped Hel.

"We had an agreement about the stakes of the competition," said Fenris, "If Matt won, you leave Astrid alone forever."

"Not forever, as she was not recovered properly. But 40 years should be long enough," said Hel smugly, Tyr glaring as he realized she'd found a loophole that not even her cheating could prevent.

"Ok, fair enough, 40 years from now I'm open game...IF I'm wearing the wolfstone then," said Astrid.

Hel snorted, "Fine, I'll see you in 40 years."

She stepped through the portal which closed up behind her. "You do realize she is the goddess of death," said Matt.

"Of unheroic death," said Astrid, "I intend to make my death count as something worthy of the Valkyries."

"Vikings are nuts," Matt muttered before yelping as a blade got embedded in his fake arm. "Who did that?!" he yelled.

"Oh, you weren't paying attention?" asked Tyr in a dry tone.

"Can we go home now?" moaned Techo.

Tyr looked around and said, "Mayhap we should take this opportunity to exterminate the vermin infesting these tunnels."

"Does anyone come here?" said Matt.

"Well, this planet is bereft of most sentient life. I think these creatures may be the only ones capable of thought beyond basic survival," said Tyr.

"Then deal with them when you want, why waste men?" said Matt.

"But let's go get rid of that stupid wolfstone," said Chris before pausing and saying, "You know, I have the odd feeling we're forgetting something." Suddenly, the ceiling broke open as Morph fell through and splattered on the ground.

"Now we're good," said Matt.

...

"Mighty Odin. This child is not ready for the responsibilities and dangers of this stone," said Fenris, he and Astrid standing in a series of runes that had been burnt in the ground, "The power of the wolf was not given to her by choice, but by accident. She deserved the right to choose if she wanted the power or not knowingly. Just as she has the right to choose to remove it."

Matt and the others were watching as Chloe nudged Matt and pointed out half a dozen wolves all sitting at the treeline, like a canine version of Alfred Hitchcock's 'The Birds'.

"Should we do something about them?" whispered Matt.

"Only if they attack," whispered Chloe, "I get the feeling they might be part of this ritual somehow."

Chloe seemed to be right as the wolves' eyes all started glowing, causing Matt to yelp as one walked between him and Chloe to get into position.

"We hear for you, but she is the one who must make her decision. She must choose to give up the strength of the wolf," said a disembodied voice.

There was a long pause before Matt said, "That's not a normal wolf, is it?"

"Considering wolves aren't native to Berk at all, no, I'd say it's safe to say it's not," said Chloe.

Matt turned to see Morph was sticking his hand through one of the wolves before gulping and saying weakly, "Morph, stop antagonizing the ghost wolves."

"I'm just trying to pet them," said Morph.

"Don't," said Matt angrily as Fenris said "It is time to choose, child. It is time for your spirit to choose what form it takes." Astrid's eyes started to glow yellow just then as the wolfstone shone brightly. The transparent figure of a wolf could be seen hovering over her.

"That's bad, she's taking Door A," yelled Matt, Chloe yelling "YOU'D BETTER NOT CHOOSE THE WOLF THING OR I'LL KICK YOUR BUTT AFTER ALL THE TROUBLE WE WENT THROUGH!"

Astrid seemed oblivious to this remark and the wolf above her was getting brighter. But then Astrid said, "I don't want this anymore. As great as this power is, it's not worth all the trouble that comes with it. I am ready to relinquish it."

The voice came back again "So be it." and the wolf spirit seemed to be sucked back down into the gem that finally came loose with a wet sounding click.

Matt and Chloe immediately dived forward, their experience with sentient items being that once they came off they usually tried to jump on someone else.

"Give it here!"

"Don't let it get away!"

"It's gonna make a run for it!"

"Ow, it scratched me!"

Fenris waited politely till Chloe held up the gem triumphantly before saying, "It doesn't move by itself."

Chloe blinked before asking, "So it's all over then?"

"Yes," said Fenris, holding out his palm for the gem, Chloe looking at it and getting a distant look as it shone, till Matt slapped the back of her head. Chloe quickly handed it over. Fenris looked at the bloody scratch on her hand and remarked, "You've hurt yourself."

"It's just a little flesh wound," said Chloe, "My nanites will heal that up in a few seconds. Oh, wait, I forgot, the healing program's on the fritz right now."

Astrid sighed, looking relieved as Fenris put the gem into a box that he clasped shut. "It's over. You should head home, child," said Fenris calmly.

Matt nodded. "Yeah, nice surprise for your folks. Chloe, you coming? Chloe?" he said, noticing one of the spirits had remained and was staring almost nose to snout with Chloe.

"OY, that's my sister!" snapped Matt. Neither Chloe nor the wolf spirit noticed until Chris let out a savage growl. The wolf spirit looked at Chris before turning and loping off, dissolving into mist

as it went.

Matt clonked the back of Chloe's head at that,
"Hey...wakey-wakey."

Chloe blinked before saying, "Was that really called for?"

"What was that staring about?" asked Matt.

"I...was just admiring it. Haven't you ever seen an animal that magnificent and graceful?" asked Chloe.

"You growled," said Matt, pointedly.

"You bonked me," retorted Chloe.

"Cause you were growling." said Matt, annoyed.

Techo muttered, "Fight shall begin in 3...2...1..."

The two Lynch siblings started wrestling with each other.
Unsurprisingly, Chloe had the upper hand. "Hmm...second early," said Chris calmly.

"Shouldn't we break them up?" asked Astrid.

"Let the pups have their play fight," said Fenris dismissively, "It's nothing to worry about."

* * *

><p>There's another chapter and the last one involving the wolfstone or Hel. It also features some creatures from one of my stories that hasn't shown up yet, sort of one of those lost stories. Don't get too frustrated if you can't find it. It'd be most likely on deviantART but it's not truly necessary to read. Just a bunch of scorpion people the gang have met before. Anyways, coming up next is the two-part finale. Hel may not be involved, but don't think for a moment that we're skimping on the action. Watch for the first half next week and please review.<p>

16. From Out of the Dark

****Voyagers Saga****

****Broken Nest****

****Chapter 16: From Out of the Dark****

With Kala found and Astrid's wolfstone removed, the only thing that was tying the gang to this world was the inactive state of their ship. Now everyone was pitching in as much as they could to get it spaceworthy. Though for some like Morph, their essential assignment was to go gather more food for the trip home.

Fenris, who had decided to attach to the crew, waiting till they left so he could use their longboat was in charge of Morph-sitting. "Ok, fluffy, what are going to do tonight?" asked Morph happily, Mac sitting next to him with its normal aimless expression of

brainlessness.

"The same thing we've been doing for the last three nights," said Fenris dryly, "Hunting and fishing."

"NONONO! You're supposed to say we're taking over the world," chirped Mac.

Fenris sighed and said, "I can't help but wonder if I've upset your commander in some way to have deal with this."

"He's always upset...FISH TIME!" said Mac, yelling the last part and firing a zap cannon blast into the sea.

Fenris just stared before looking at Morph who was gathering the fish before saying "So...why have you several cursed gems in a box?"

"I collect them," said Morph as if it were something perfectly normal to say.

"You realize it's insanely dangerous?" said Fenris calmly.

"Hey, I don't complain about your hobbies," said Morph.

"My hobbies keep dangerous magical artifacts," said Fenris loftily.

"And what's the big difference between our hobbies?" asked Morph.

"From what I've heard, you don't protect these rocks from anyone," said Fenris smugly.

"Hey, it's their own fault for snooping," said Morph.

"In a blank box?" said Fenris before Matt, who was passing said "Don't even try, he's too stupid to argue with."

Fenris turned to Matt and asked, "How much more food do we need?"

"Alot more, just keep Mac shooting," said Matt before walking off.

Fenris growled and said, "If I find out later that was a lie, you will feel my vengeance."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah," said Matt.

...

"What do you mean that the ship's a giant paperweight?" snapped Chloe.

"It's the power core," said Techo, "You have any idea how much a power core can deteriorate when it's been left in the cold for at least a hundred years?"

"How bad?" sighed Chloe.

"Well...it's not as bad, but the igniter crystals are useless. Without a suitable replacement, the ship's useless," said Techo gloomily.

"And where are we supposed to find igniter crystals on this mudball?" demanded Chloe.

"Nowhere, I even checked Morph's box," snapped Techo, rubbing his forehead to get rid of a headache that was forming

"Nothing...came out, did it?" asked Chloe.

"Nope, nothing," said Techo, happily, everyone breathing sighs of relief.

"Good, now we have to find some way of getting some igniter crystals; make them, find some, steal some, I don't care," said Chloe.

"Yeah, we only need to wait to see if this Earth invents crystal-based computer systems," said Matt sarcastically before WARDEN said "There is a possible hit on file. I managed to bring external sensors online. Something is emitting suitable energy 40 miles to the north."

"That would be within the arctic circle, wouldn't it?" asked Matt.

"It's close enough and do we care? It's our only shot," said WARDEN.

"Fine, I guess we'll have to bundle up," said Matt.

"Who will we leave in charge?" asked Techo, everyone thinking before saying "Fenris."

"Are we going to leave some of the more sensible members behind so he doesn't end up tearing out his own fur?" asked Chris.

"He'll be fine," said Matt.

"I dunno, he seems like he's getting ready to crack," said Techo.

"Ah, what's the worst he can do to me, give me fleas?" mocked Matt.

"He could bite you..." began Techo before everyone said automatically "Not a werewolf."

"Doesn't mean it wouldn't still hurt," said Techo.

"Let's just go before he realizes," said Matt sneakily, Chloe sighing as the others followed him.

...

Quite naturally, no one went to the ice cap. It wasn't just because dragons avoid on account of their cold blood, but there was nothing really up there that was worth enduring all the blistering cold.

"Ok WARDEN, where's this damn signal?" Matt yelled over the wind, the group having arrived during a proto-snowstorm.

"Just a moment, the cold may interfere with my sensors," said WARDEN.

"Gee...what cold could that be?" snapped Chloe.

"Just stick tight to where you are," said WARDEN, "You don't want anyone wandering off and finding trouble."

"We are trouble," joked Chris.

"Yeah, besides, what trouble could we run into out here?" asked Matt. There was a snorting sound behind him and he turned around to find himself face-to-snout with a polar bear. "...Oh."

The others watched as the polar bear gave chase after Matt with an angry roar, the latter screaming the entire way. "Okay, that happened, are you sure this signals here, WARDEN?" said Chloe.

"Yes it should be...oh, how embarrassing," said WARDEN.

"What?" asked Chris.

"It would seem I have forgotten to check for altitude," said WARDEN, "Allow me a moment to determine the Z axis." The group expectantly looked up until WARDEN said, "Got it. The energy source I've detected is located approximately 4 miles...below your current location."

Chloe twitched at that before snapping "Ok...shall I pull a submarine out my arse?"

"That is not entirely necessary," said WARDEN, "If there is an Atlantean facility at this location, there will most likely be a surface access of some sort. A lift or a teleporter perhaps."

The group looked up to looking around, trying to spy anything and ignoring Matt and his furry pursuer before Matt apparently vanished into thin air. The polar bear stopped and sniffed around where Matt had vanished. Then it gave up and wandered off.

"Oh look, he found it," said Chloe, the group waling over to see a manhole-sized disk barely visible in the snow, a faint glow vanishing.

"We're lucky we didn't have to dig through the ice to find it," said Wilson.

Chloe shrugged before pushing Techo onto the pad, it flashing and causing him to vanish. "Next," she called.

...

Techo was thrown out of the other side of the teleporter pad and ended up against the far wall n3ext to Matt. "Oh...hello," Matt groaned.

The others came in a lot more gracefully. "So, what exactly is this

place?" asked Wilson.

Matt looked around, saying "Reminds me of the wyvern facility on Avalar."

"Which probably means we'll be dealing with some of Atlantis's grow-your-own-monsters here," said Chloe.

"Oh goody. What is it today? Giant polar bears with laser eyes?" Mat snapped, everyone pausing worriedly at that.

"Chances are it's dragon-based," said Chris.

"What makes you say that?" asked Wilson.

"Because it's always dragons, every time," said Chris.

"Yeah, I suppose it makes sense in an ice land," said Matt, walking over to the door, opening it...and finding nothing.

"Maybe we're lucky this time," said Wilson.

Matt nodded. "Maybe...but let's be careful, all the same," he said carefully.

...

The facility itself was deserted. There were signs of life, animal life littered around. Several doors were also sealed and the cause was easy to see when they peered in to see that the rooms were flooded due to blast damage that had let the sea in.

"Ok...so they made things that explode," said Chris carefully.

"What do you think made this mess?" asked Chloe.

"Probably something I don't want to meet," said Matt as they moved.

They passed by a small cluster of crystals in the wall they didn't pay attention to. After they passed, the rock under the crystals shifted. The lump of rock detached itself from the wall as the stone segmented into plates with folded up under the crystals, allowing jade-colored fur to come out. A head, arms, legs, and tail uncurled from under, revealing a creature that looked oddly like a jade fennec fox that stood on two legs, had a segmented rock armor on its back, and a gem on its forehead that matched the crystals also on its back.

The fox thing silently wandered up behind the others, looking up as they discussed. "I bet it's more wyverns," said Techo angrily, none of them looking around as the fox stuck its tongue out silently at the group and making a silent foxy laugh.

"Nah, I'm betting it's something nastier, like some flightless cave-dwelling dragon," said Chris.

The fox glared at that, looking offended, sending a bolt of electrical energy into Chris's, who was next to Chloe's, butt before rapidly turning back into a rock as he yelped.

Chris turned to Chloe and snapped, "Real mature, Chloe."

"What?" asked Chloe.

Chris glared before turning back, the fox unfolding again and waiting again as Chloe said "Bet whatever it was is dumb and ugly as sin." causing the fox to snort quietly angrily before sending a crystal shard into Chloe's butt, hiding again as Chloe span, snapped at Chris and yelled "PERVERT!" and knocked him out.

Matt sighed and said, "Kids, don't make me reach back there."

Techo sighed as well before turning and tripping over the disguised rock. "Ok...ow," he snapped angrily.

"Was that rock there before?" asked Wilson.

"No, it probably fell from the ceiling...which means it's getting ready to collapse," said Techo, his voice growing worried. The others looked up nervously before Techo got his scanner too close to the rock and it blew out. "Then again..." he began before a real rock fell on Chris's head.

"Let's move to somewhere stable," said Matt.

Techo nodded, grabbing the rock before running after them, Chloe dragging Chris along after them. After a minute, all of the debris deformed into a mix n match of other fox creatures...

...

Meanwhile, Fenris was fighting a different battle for survival, the survival of his sanity.

"Now look...come down from there...NOW!" he said, roaring the last word and glaring up at where Morph and Mac, wearing pirate hats were sitting on a pile of crates they had named 'Treasure Island'. Several patches of singed fur were testament to Fenris's attempts to get them down

"Ye'll never take us!" called Morph.

"Keelhaul him!" squealed Mac.

"What?" said Fenris before a rock materialized in front of Mac and shot into Fenris's face

"Is that what keelhaul means?" asked Morph.

"I dunno," said Mac.

Fenris got back up, his eye twitching before he snapped "That...is...IT!"

"What's it?" asked Mac.

"I think he wants to play tag," said Morph. Fenris roared, materializing his sword in his hand and lunging at the duo. "Ooh, he

looks mad now," said Morph.

"Ah, that's no problem," said Mac before using Teleport and taking Morph with him.

Fenris glared at that before Matt and the others came in. "You owe me 10 creds," Chris said happily.

"I wonder how crazy our two little idiots have driven Fenris," commented Matt.

"Er, why don't you ask him?" asked Chloe pointing. Matt turned around to see Fenris's glaring face right in front of him.

"Hey, I fought off a polar bear up there, so don't think I can't go 10 rounds with-" said Matt before Fenris grabbed Matt by the throat and started slamming him into the wall.

"Pretty mad, I'd say," said Chris with a smirk before he and Chloe saw the rock.

"Ok...why'd you bring that again?" Chloe asked.

"That crystal's giving off a lot of energy," said Techo, "It fried my scanner so it ought to be useful for something."

"Maybe we got our trigger?" said Chloe cheerfully, tapping the rock...which wriggled. "Uh, rocks don't wriggle, do they?" asked Chloe.

"I don't know, let's just chisel those crystals off," said Wilson.

The rock bounced up at that, knocking Techo below the chin, before bouncing down and bouncing back up into his groin at high speed with a disturbing crunch before rolling away down a corridor

Chris and Wilson winced in male sympathy. "We better get some ice on that," said Chris.

"Good thing we're living in a glacier," said Wilson.

"GET THAT BOULDER!" yelled Chloe.

Surprisingly, the geode moved a lot faster than most people would assume a rock was capable of. Not to mention it seemed to be able to sense danger coming. Several troopers ended up faceplanted into walls or getting similar groin attacks while trying to grab it before it rolled into Morph's room, the closed door not even slowing it down.

Morph was lying in his bed when the geode rolled in. He looked at it and said, "Hey, another shiny rock for my collection. You wait there, little fella." He reached under his bed and suddenly got yanked under. The rock rolled to a stop as several angry roars came from under the bed, the resident mold monster having survived. "Down, down, it's me, you silly thing, gimme back my box," came Morph's voice.

There was a spitting noise and Morph shot back out to splat against

the wall, the rock unfolding into the fox form to watch, the blob clearly being more dangerous to itself than anything else. Morph shook his head a bit before looking at the fox. "Aw, aren't you the cutest little thing?" cooed Morph. The fox yelped as Morph waddled up and gave it a hug before beginning to glow. "I can already tell we're gonna be best friends forever," said Morph, not noticing the humming energy.

...

Matt and the others ran round the corner. "When I catch that boulder, I'm gonna blow it up!" he snapped before the door exploded.

"Looks like Morph beat you to it," said Wilson.

"Or he messed up with his collection again," said Chloe.

Chris peered in to see Morph was giggling while painted over his room and a dazed looking green fox thing sitting in the middle of a blast crater. "Morph's got a new pet," said Chris.

"Is a tentacled horror?" asked Matt.

"Not this time," said Chris, "It's actually kinda cute."

Chloe peered in to see the fox who had shook its head back to sense before it looked at them and snarled, remembering the insults.

"Aw, it's so cute," said Chloe.

"That probably means trouble for me," muttered Matt. The fox glared as Chloe petted it before it bit her hand, causing her smile to freeze in place. "Yep, it's Jigglypuff all over again," said Matt, he and Techo backing up.

Chloe glared before aiming a punch at the fox which glowed and revealed what the explosion had been.

...

On a different island, the other group of off-world castaways was just about ready to take off. The only problem being they had nothing to show for their efforts.

"The emperor's gonna kill us, you realize that, right?" said OmegaMorph calmly.

"By 'us', you mean everyone except yourself as usual, right?" said Anton dryly.

"Yeah...you might get off," said Omegamorph.

"Well if you hadn't woken up the big dragon and just let take samples instead, we wouldn't be having this big setback," snapped Anton.

"And maybe YOU should stop pussy footing around?" snapped OmegaMorph.

"I'm getting better results than your ham-handing!" snapped

Anton.

"Oh...you wanna start..." began OmegaMorph before their comm droid hovered up unnoticed and began a call from their boss

"Why are you wasting your time arguing on this pathetic water-soaked rock, you two pointlessly arguing dunderheads?" snapped Emperor Hamsterviel.

"Ok...ok...look, we lost our backup..." began Anton.

"In an exceedingly incompetent way that involved a lot over overestimating I bet," said Hamsterviel.

"We encountered unexpected resistance. Maybe our actual allies in the NSC should come and help?" suggested OmegaMorph sarcastically.

"I suggest you two find something worth taking back and get back here already," snapped Hamsterviel, "We have at least two rebel planets that need to be subdued."

"Yes...sir," growled OmegaMorph, Anton glaring and saying "Fine."

After Hamsterviel signed off, OmegaMorph said, "So, what say we steal a bunch of dragon eggs and get the heck out of here?"

"And get turned into a science experiment? No. There's at least one member of Lynch's crew who is nicer and vulnerable. You get a holo cloak and meet me at the ship," said Anton.

"Why should I have a holo-cloak?" protested OmegaMorph.

"Because, I have a good idea where at least one of Lynch's crew is...all alone and vulnerable," said Anton with a dark grin

...

Naturally, Anton didn't trust OmegaMorph to behave properly during this mission so he also slapped the restrictor collar on him.

"Heeey...the air's like...breathable," said OmegaMorph in a overly happy tone of voice, being led along by Anton as Stoick walked up and Anton pushed OmegaMorph away and got a sad look. "Greetings," he said, putting the verbal honey on extra thick

"Welcome to Berk, we don't get too many strangers out here," said Stoick, giving Anton a wary look.

"Thank you. I have heard from my brother of this village," said Anton smoothly before the happy-fied OmegaMorph started singing

"And who would your brother be?" asked Stoick.

"Cap-Chief Lynch," said Anton smoothly.

"I don't see much of a family resemblance," said Stoick.

"I get that all the time. I heard he got a dragon of his own," said Anton smoothly.

"Ay, a particularly rare and powerful dragon too," said Gobber.

"May I see it?" asked Anton.

Stoick gave him a suspicious look and said, "I think we better wait for your 'brother' to get here first."

"It's fine. We trust each other completely," said Anton with a pleasant smile.

"Then you won't mind waiting for him to come and collaborate what you say," said Stoick.

"I'm sure he'd be very offended that you didn't trust me," said Anton, sounding hurt.

"Or he might be very relieved," said Stoick.

Anton glared at that. "I'm sure," he said annoyed before sighing, "I suppose I'll have to go and fetch Matt myself to convince you."

"How do you know where he lives?" asked Gobber.

"He's my brother, we always keep in touch with each other," said Anton before turning to leave. He stopped at the last minute, nodding to the disguised OmegaMorph. "May my companion stay to relay my message?" he asked.

"I suppose so," said Stoick.

Anton nodded, turning down OmegaMorph's collar power a little as he turned before whispering into his comm. "No killing anyone, get Kala, understand?" he muttered as he walked back to the boat.

A bit of lucidity returned to OmegaMorph's eyes as he said, "Quite clear."

Stoick looked confused at that "What was that?" he asked.

OmegaMorph's eyes crossed as he sang, "White deer, white deer, look at them go." Stoick stared for a minute before shrugging and walking off, muttering about crazy people. As soon as the two Vikings were gone, OmegaMorph grinned and said, "An old-fashioned town sacking, oh, how I am going to enjoy this."

Anton's voice in his ear said, "No, this is in and out before Lynch catches on and tears you apart at the molecular level."

OmegaMorph snorted before saying, "He doesn't have the strength to do that."

"Willing to take that chance?" said Anton smugly.

OmegaMorph was about to get cocky when he felt the collar start to power up. "Fine, have it your way, killjoy," grumbled OmegaMorph.

"Just find her," said Anton's voice

OmegaMorph growled softly before sniffing the air. The dragon pens were not too far. He started heading off in that general direction.

...

Kala however was in a far better mood. In a few days, she'd have opposable thumbs again. Not to mention she'd be able to speak without a translator collar. There were quite a few things that she wanted to say as well. Some of it probably shouldn't be repeated.

"So...where will you guys go when this is all over?"_ asked Stormfly.

"Well, Avalar first,"_ said Kala before giving it some thought and saying, "_I'm not sure where next. We have a lot more people want to kill us than help us."_

"Why not stay here then?"_ suggested Meatlug.

"No offense, but this place is a little too primitive for me,"_ said Kala, "_Not to mention I expect Chip will go mad if he has to remain here."_

"The metal thing?"_ asked Hookfang.

"Yeah, the one who screams if you mention abacuses,"_ said Kala.

"He doesn't seem like that much of a threat,"_ said Hookfang.

"There's no telling what people will do if they lose it, particularly if they're very smart before that,"_ said Kala, "_Besides, I'm pretty sure he wouldn't be the only one."_

"Like Matt?"_ said Stormfly, getting a murmuring of agreements.

"Well, that does spring prominently to mind,"_ said Kala, "_So yeah, we have to go as soon as we are able. Hel might have called it quits, but that doesn't mean something just as bad won't come along."_

A clicking was heard, the dragons looking up to see the door opening and a Viking walking in, tossing what looked like the bent lock aside. Seeing that got the dragons' group interest. As the Viking got closer, Kala growled. This guy smelled of trouble and she didn't like his face.

"Ok, I'm in the damn pen...there's two of them...which one? No, I'm not gonna check," said the Viking, apparently to himself. The dragons looked mostly confused, but Kala had the feeling that this so-called Viking was speaking to someone over a comm. "Ok...ok...let's see," said the viking, reaching into...himself and pulling out a headset

Kala snarled and shot a plasma blast at the Viking. The others looked

horrified...then even more horrified when the blast didn't seem to do anything.

"Ok, I think I've got a pretty good idea which one's her. Preparing teleporter tag...get ready to reel her in," the Viking said before Toothless landed in front of him, baring his teeth. "Oh no...whatever will I do?" he said sarcastically. Toothless was about to bite him when the Viking smacked the dragon with enough force to send him flying into the opposite wall. The others looked surprised before they charged him...

...

Matt hopped off the longboat and onto the dock to see Gobber. "Hey there, I came to check of Starflame," Matt said in greeting.

"Yer brother dropped by to do the same thing," said Gobber.

"I don't have a brother," said Matt off-handedly.

"Stoick thought you didn't, so he didn't let him see Starflame. The fellow went off ta find ya and left his big lout behind." Matt pushed past Gobber at that, running up the dock.

...

"Stay STILL!" snapped OmegaMorph, trying to force a tag onto Kala's neck while fighting the other dragons back too. Of course, fighting off a group of dragons is not easy to do when you're trying to accomplish a task. Particularly with the dragons spitting various forms of fire at you.

"This...is...ENOUGH!" he snapped, sending a blast of energy out in all directions. The blast was enough to scatter the dragons around the arena, dazed from the blast.

"Now then..." began OmegaMorph with a toothy grin, the energy blast having shorted out his hologram, grinning at Kala who now looked terrified. "Please try to resist," he said evilly.

...

Matt ran across the bridge towards the pen, and saw the doors were wide open. "No...nonono!" he began, running into the pen with the Vikings close behind and spotted OmegaMorph.

Matt didn't give a thought to how many witnesses there were around him or who all was in the pen. The only thing on his mind was that monster was going after Kala. He pointed his palm at OmegaMorph and fired multiple plasma blasts.

OmegaMorph turned in shock as the first shot hit him before the others caused him to stagger back before he was gripped in a plasma field and thrown into a wall. "I'm guessing the petting zoo is closed right now," taunted OmegaMorph. Matt glared, his costume tearing in places as he changed to hybrid form and advanced angrily. "Ooh, you're in an ugly mood," taunted OmegaMorph.

Matt snarled before sending a blast at OmegaMorph, sending him through the wall. OmegaMorph just got up and shook himself off. "Oh,

so you wanna rumble, do you?" he said. Matt simply lunged at him.

...

Chris and the others were still at the docks when they saw the first explosion. "What the hell?" began Techo.

"That had better not come from Matt," said Chloe.

Several more blasts were heard at that. "Shit, let's get up there," said Chris.

As they ran, Chloe growled, "He better have a good reason for breaking cover."

Something shot overhead at that, smashing a near U out of a roof to hit another one. Matt soon flew after it, clearly in hybrid form.

"Matt, get the hell down from there!" yelled Chloe, trying to get his attention and nobody noticing the rubble moving.

"He tried to take Kala!" snapped Matt.

Chloe sighed. "Killing someone will not..." she began before a blade nearly took her head off, only a developed 6th sense allowing her to avoid it.

The group turned to see something large and black emerging from the rubble. "Ah, you've brought your backup," said OmegaMorph, "Not like that's gonna save you." A second later, he had half a dozen laser sights on him. "I hate my job," groaned OmegaMorph before everyone shot him at once. The various blasts made his body explode and his head was shot up into the air and far, far away.

"Asshole," muttered Chloe before they noticed two things: first, that they had an audience and two, that Kala had been left alone. "Uh, Matt, maybe you should go check on Kala," said Chloe.

"Yer not going anywhere, monster," snapped a Viking, only for Matt to backhand him aside and run back for the pen.

Chloe turned to the Vikings and said, "Now, if everyone can just calm down, I can explain everything." The group of Vikings glared before Chloe finally admitted "Ok, I got nothing."

"Right, we'll be getting out of your hair and LOOK IT'S COMING BACK FOR ANOTHER ROUND!" yelled Techo, pointing behind the Vikings.

Despite everything, they turned to look before turning back to see the gang had vanished. "I can't believe that tricked us," groaned one of them

"There's still that other monster at the arena," pointed out another villager. The group immediately charged off back towards the arena.

...

OmegaMorph staggered in a circle, trying to get his brain to work again. He was alot more durable then NegaMorph had ever been but he was still dazed from being blasted around. Not to mention being left as just a head flying through the air can seriously mess up your orientation.

He managed to finally grab his head and snap it into the right direction. "Ok, when I get my hands on that creep..." he began before seeing Kala and the dragons all grinning. "Ah, screw you, you smug smegheads," he snapped.

The combined fire attacks produced a particularly fantastic explosion, blowing up all but OmegaMorph's head which was sent flying out to sea. "I HATE YOOOOuuuu!" screamed OmegaMorph as he vanished before the now fully shifted Matt landed in the pen, snarling like a chainsaw and staring with pinprick pupils

"Thanks for the prompt rescue, but we blew him away now," said Kala, _"Not that you can understand a word I'm saying."_

Matt didn't seem to be operating on anything except pure grade a rage and with the target of his rage gone, he seemed to be getting even more angry.

"This is when we back away slowly, right?" asked Meatlug.

Matts head span to face Meatlug at that. "Yeah," said Kala slowly as Matt opened his mouth, a blue flickering glow inside it.

Just then, a loud commotion was heard coming towards the arena: the telltale sign of an angry mob on the move. Matt turned his head and sent the blast into the door frame, blocking the only way in before he looked around angrily, roaring in frustration and sending several more blasts in several directions. The dragons scrambled to get out of the way, which is not easy for a larger lifeform with limited flying space. After a minute, the blasts stopped, Matt simply glowering at his surroundings

The other dragons didn't move a muscle, but Kala got in front of Matt and said, _"Matt, stop it. You've already saved me from OmegaMorph and you're just making more trouble now."_

Matt glared before seeming to calm down...just in time for the mob to start breaking in. _"You're not going to get out that easily,"_ said Kala, "Barf, can you make a smokescreen?" Barf nodded, burping up the flammable gas his species could produce, Matt looking confused, his brain clearly still not back to human intelligence yet _"Matt, you need to make a break for it,"_ said Kala, _"Oh, why bother saying it? You can't understand a word I say. Ok, here's something you might understand."_ She suddenly lunged forward and bit Matt on the nose.

Matt's eyes went full feral again at that and he roared, giving chase as Kala took off and flew for it. The villagers had managed to get the gate open only to get blinded by the gas. They didn't have much time to feel their way through before they were bowled over by Kala followed by Matt. Toothless and the others looked innocent as the gas cleared to reveal the damage and the lack of Matt and Kala.

"Where'd that monster go?" asked one of the villagers.

"One of the Night Furies is missing too," said another.

If the dragons could have spoken, they would have been whistling innocently.

...

Meanwhile, Kala was starting to understand what Matt was dealing with when the Red Death had used her focused rage to attack him. She yelped as another hail of blasts barely missed her. "HEY! THAT ALMOST HIT ME!" she yelled.

She almost paused in midair at that. Those words came out as distinctly English, not dragon roars. But that was not enough to stop her from fleeing from Matt. It also seemed that Matt was too far gone for now to care as several more blasts missed her. "Ohshitohshit!" she muttered, flying towards the distant fake iceberg that formed the gang's base. It was a relief to notice that Kala had a better flying speed than Matt, however, his shots had a longer range and bigger blast radius.

She could see several of Matt's men on the surface, a few running to positions. "IT'S ME! DON'T YOU DARE SHOOT ME!" she screamed as she flew towards them. Quite a few of them paused in shock, but then Matt's enraged roars made them scramble.

...

Chloe was not in a good mood. The teleport beacons that Techo had designed had gotten them back in seconds, but the fact that their allies probably wanted them dead now didn't help her mood. As such when she heard a roar from above, something inside snapped.

"I HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS CRAP!" she yelled as she stormed towards the front door.

She stomped up the stairs and out to the surface in time for one of the marines to fly past her, out cold and turned to see Matt, in full dragon form playing pinball with his own men and Kala running towards her...and speaking?

"Chloe, oh thank god, Matt's gone nutso!" she said, causing Chloe to stare in shock for a second.

"Kala, how are you..." started Chloe before a plasma orb from Matt nearly hit her and she remembered the reason why she came up there. "Hold that thought," she said darkly, glaring at Matt and saying darkly, "Try that...one more time."

Matt snarled before spitting another orb of molten plasma at Chloe. Chloe's eye twitched at that and a dark grin appeared on her face.

...

The more senior members of the crew were starting to head out to confront the battlecrazed Matt when Chloe walked back in. She had quite a bit of blood on her, but she was smiling in a very unnerving

way. "Do see to my brother, won't you?" she said in an oddly sweet tone, "He's had a bit of a nasty scrap and needs to check into the medibay."

"Oh boy, he tried to blast her more than once," said Chris slowly, the others nodding weakly.

Chloe was about to walk on before she paused and said, "And before I forget, Kala's feeling better now. Make sure you have something nice to say to her."

The others looked confused before heading up and wincing to see Matt looking like he'd been repeatedly run over by a monster struck and Kala facepawing before she saw them. "Oh...hey guys," she said gloomily.

"Kala...you're talking," said Chris a little dumbly.

"Apparently, guess my nanites finally worked out I was broke," said Kala, poking Matt who gibbered, "Talking of broke..."

"Lemme guess, his healing program is still not responding correctly," said Draco.

"I think he'll still need to go to the medibay even if it was working," said Chip.

...

"I can't believe you didn't do the ONE JOB that I gave you." snapped Anton, glaring at OmegaMorph, who was trying to reattach his head

"Lynch was a lot more explosive than I'd thought he'd be," said OmegaMorph, "And dragon fire can do a lot more damage than you would think. If you had allowed me some more leeway..."

"No...not till we're ready. We'd need far more men than what we have," snapped Anton.

"I saw a village as my head was on its way back." said OmegaMorph.

"As if any of those Vikings would be willing to join up with us," said Anton dismissively, "They probably won't be giving strangers the time to speak after that fiasco. Hopefully that'll be enough problems for Lynch and his crew."

"I doubt it. These Vikings I saw were definitely our sort of people," said OmegaMorph with a smirk.

Anton lifted his eyebrow a tad before saying, "Even if these were the type of brutes that can be easily hired for mayhem, their use is still limited even to act as a diversion. And passing around guns won't as helpful as you'd think."

OmegaMorph muttered "Vikings with lasers would be awesome though."

"Lynch's crew would easily be able to knock them down, even with

proper weaponry. They wouldn't even be able to capture his attention for very long," said Anton, "We need something more effective than that."

OmegaMorph was about to complain when a tech walked in, "Sirs, sorry to interrupt but I picked up something on coms. Some kinda signal that's moving through the local area."

"What kind of signal?" asked Anton.

"Not sure, some kinda command signal judging from the wavelength," said the tech.

"Have you been able to determine what it's coming from?" asked Anton.

"Whatever it is, it's moving," said the tech.

"I want to find out what it is, where it's going, and how to override that command signal," said Anton.

"Y-yes sir," said the tech nervously.

"Aren't we supposed to be focused on capturing Lynch's girlfriend?" asked OmegaMorph dryly.

"This could be the step in the right direction we've been looking for," said Anton.

...

Hiccup and the others finally managed to slip out of town and over to the gang. The news wasn't good. "So...we're demons?" said Techo gloomily.

"The words 'witches' and 'Hel's spawn' have been thrown around as well," said Hiccup.

"Kinda expected that, how much egging on is Mildew doing?" asked Chloe

"Oh, quite a bit, he's been on a roll with claiming you've been 'leading us kids down the wrong path'," said Astrid.

"Can we kill him now?" asked Chris, Chloe actually pausing till the kids glared.

"Villagers can easily spooked, like with that lightning thing you told us about," said Chloe, "What's really important is what the chief thinks of this."

"Dad's suspicious but he's prevented a fleet coming after you," said Hiccup gravely.

"Ok, good, so long as he's not declaring war," said Chloe, "We've done plenty of good things for Berk that he might remember, like with the draugr and treating your sickness. We'll probably have to clean with a lot more stuff though."

Hiccup nodded, only for Matt to say, "Right, let's do a check:

OmegaMorph's found us, the village hates us, and Morph's got an exploding pet."

"Exploding pet?" asked Ruffnut.

"Is it like a Firewyrn because that would be awesome," said Tuffnut.

"No, it's more like a MEATLUG, GET THAT OUT OF YOUR MOUTH!" yelled Chloe before going past the kids and trying to pry Meatlug's mouth open. The kids watched as Chloe managed to pull a crystal-studded rock out of Meatlug's mouth before tossing it into the corner where it exploded.

After the smoke cleared, the rock was still there before it uncurled into a fox-like critter. "What is that?" asked Hiccup.

"We found it at the North Pole," said Matt cheerfully, the critter weaving up dizzily to Astrid.

"It's pretty cute," said Astrid bending down and scratching behind the critter's ear. The critter cooed happily before jumping up and sitting on her shoulder.

"Really? That's all it took to get to cooperate?" asked Chloe.

"Well, to be fair, you were kinda going at him aggressively," said Techo only to shut up when Chloe glared at him. The critter blew a raspberry at them at that, causing Chloe to snap and lunge at it, the creature jumping up and running down her spine as Chloe barreled into Astrid

"You have to admit he'd fit right in with this crazyass crew," said Chris.

"He's still giving off those energy bursts," said Techo thoughtfully.

"What kind of creature is it anyways?" asked Hiccup, "It doesn't look like a dragon."

"We found it in an Atlantean facility, one of their experiments," said Wilson, tossing the creature a piece of bacon from his sandwich which it ate happily.

"Was it hard to break in?" asked Snotlout.

"Nope, no security at all," said Matt cheerfully before a clunk was heard. "What was that?" he said manically cheerfully

Chip's voice was heard on the intercom, "Matt, we're picking up something on the sonar. By the looks of it, it's large, it's in the water, and it's coming for us."

"If that stupid Scauldron's here to gulp me again..." growled Matt.

"It's not Steampipe," said Chip, "It's much bigger."

Matt stopped at that, walking slowly to a wall and pressing a button, causing a hatch to open to show the ocean...or it should have. A vast yellow eye was staring in, a slit that looked like an 'X' peering in.

Matt stared back at it before pushing the button and closing the hatch again. He slowly turned around as the shock started to wear off. Then he yelled "SEA MONSTER!" and ran down the hall, screaming like a little girl.

The others paused before the hatch buckled from a blow, several streams of water coming in. "EVERYONE OUT!" snapped Chris.

Everyone ran down the hall. The critter had leaped back into Astrid's arms and was shivering with fright. Deep roars could be heard as something slammed against the base. There was also several sirens beginning to ring. "Alert...pressure integrity failing...evacuate floor 12 at once."

"Where are those external defenses?!" snapped Chloe.

There was a crashing noise and the roar of water behind them. "Oh, there they are," snapped Matt sarcastically.

Just then, a shadow portal opened up and NegaMorph poked his head out. "Guys, you're not gonna believe what-" he started before everyone barreled past him through the portal. "Wow, don't think anyone entered in willing before," he said. He looked up to see a wall of water barreling down the corridor. "Oh...there's why...ARRRRRRGH!" he said, screaming the last part before ducking back in.

The other end of the portal was outside on the iceberg, which was being shaken violently. The dragons outside were all pretty spooked and looked about ready to take off.

"Sea monsters...why is it always sodding sea monsters?" said Matt shakily.

NegaMorph sighed. "Look, it's not necessarily a sea monster, not everything in the sea here wants to kill-" he began before a tentacle crushed him.

Several tentacles rose out of the water and started slamming against the iceberg. "The kraken?!" yelled Fishlegs, "You guys have the kraken attacking you?!"

"I guess so. WHAT ELSE HAS TENTACLES LIKE THAT?" snapped Matt manically, losing it.

"We need to get to the air, it's our only chance," said Hiccup as he dashed towards Toothless.

The kraken however seemed to suddenly lose interest, several of its tentacles freezing in place as if it was thinking about crushing Lynch

"What is it doing?" whispered Astrid.

"Not sure, don't move," whispered Matt.

The kraken finally came into view, several huge cybernetics visible around what was presumably its head, its anger visible. "Matt, it's got-" started Techo only for Matt to shush him.

The kraken gave a rumbling before slowly dropping back under the sea, one tentacle seeming to flip them off but that would be silly...right?

Everyone let out a sigh of relief. "Ok, I want a damage report to see what that thing's done and someone to figure out why it came in the first place. If you need me, I'll be passed out right here," said Matt before falling over.

Chloe however was looking over the edge at the ripples. "What was that about?" she muttered.

...

"Confirmed, signal is strong. As long as we keep the original transmitter jammed then that thing's all ours," said the tech, proudly.

"A sea monster under our command, that will be very useful," said Anton.

OmegaMorph glared. "We should have let it crush them, one less problem," he snapped.

"You seem to have forgotten there are certain members of Lynch's crew that we want to capture alive," said Anton, "But now we have two advantages: control over the kraken and knowledge of where Lynch's base is."

"So have the kraken drag the ones we want alive back," snapped OmegaMorph, only to yelp as the collar shocked him.

"Does it look like a delivery service system to you?" asked Anton, "Anything that creature catches would be dead long before it arrived here. It can only be used for assault."

"Then let's assault. I'm sick of sitting doing nothing. Plus that jerk blew me up, THREE TIMES!" snapped OmegaMorph.

"We've no chance of taking her with all of them around, even with the kraken. No, what we need to do is force them to divide their resources," said Anton.

"Like what?" snapped OmegaMorph before Anton grinned "Can you teleport me to that village you spotted?"

"Why bother with them if we've got a kraken?" asked OmegaMorph.

"Because if we have them control it. We can attack the Lynches while they're trying to stop the kraken," sneered Anton, turning to the tech, "Can you miniaturize the control unit? Make it look Norse?"

"I think so, though it'll probably limit to the more basic commands," said the tech.

"Fine, just get it done quick," said Anton.

"Yes, sir," said the tech, running off.

...

Alvin was not in a good mood. Several strange things had occurred around Berk and his scouts had either vanished or come back with insane stories.

"We 'aven't attacked Berk in weeks an' it seems like every myth an' their old aunt has been assaultin' 'em on a regular basis," grumbled Alvin, "If we don't 'it Berk soon, they'll start thinkin' we're goin' soft."

A knock at his hut was heard at that. "Get lost, I'm thinkin'!" he yelled before another more forceful knock was heard. Alvin glared, yelling something best left unwritten here before the door exploded.

A man walked through and said, "Pardon the mess, but I tend to forget my manners when others forget theirs." Alvin glared, reaching for his axe only for the newcomer to say "I really wouldn't. People who do that tend to die." in a calm voice.

Alvin peered closely at the man. He seemed normal enough, but he had the kind of look that doesn't accompany empty boasting. "Ya got pretty big nerve for showin' up without an invitation," said Alvin.

"I'm sorry, I thought you wanted to have Berk as a smoldering crater," said the man sarcastically

"Well ya thought wrong," said Alvin, "What good would a smolderin' crater do me, eh? When ya go through a lotta trouble to conquer some land, it oughta be land worth conquerin'."

"It's a figure of speech, you overevolved ape," said the man coldly.

"Takes even bigger nerve to insult a Vikin' in 'is own 'ouse," said Alvin, stepping up to the stranger who was noticeably shorter than he was.

"I really wouldn't," smirked the man, showing off some prominent canines.

"So ya got some nasty teeth. Won't make much of a difference if I just punch 'em outta your mouth," said Alvin, "But I'm guessin' you came here for better reasons than startin' a fight."

"I came to offer you the perfect weapon to crush the Hooligans in under a hour of its deployment," said the man with a smirk.

Alvin lifted an eyebrow and asked, "People don't go 'andin' out ultimate weapons, especially to people who don't know 'em."

"No catch, you just do what you do best: cause mayhem. Just try to take hostages...and if I find out one dragon was hurt, I'll make you

wish you were dead," said the man with a cold smile that confirmed he meant every word.

"And what be this weapon yer tryin' to 'ock?" asked Alvin.

"A kraken," said the man casually.

Alvin laughed boisterously and said, "I wasn't born yesterday, pal. No one 'as been able to find where the kraken lives and come back ta tell the tale, let alone tame one. Try someone more gullible like them Berserkerers."

The man motioned to walk out. "We brought it with us," he said calmly.

Alvin decided to humor the stranger before he kicked him off his island with an axe wedged where it would make it very uncomfortable to sit down. The sight outside got rid of that, the light blotted out by the huge creature looming over their docks. "You like?" said the man.

"'Ow in blazes did ya capture that thing?" asked Alvin.

"That's for me to know and you to wonder about. Now then, my termsâ€¦" said the man calmly.

"No armin' dragons, ya say," said Alvin, "I expect there be somethin' else as well."

"There is a particular dragon, a female Night Fury. It's mine..." said the man, his voice getting cold again before he added, "Her rider is fair game...if you can."

"Female Night Fury, eh?" said Alvin, "It wouldn't 'appen to be the mate of 'Iccup's dragon, would it?"

The man snorted at that. "You're kidding," he managed, laughing

"Is there a joke I'm missin' out on?" asked Alvin.

"Trust me when I say you couldn't be further off in your theory. If you catch that dragoness, my employers will give you enough gold to buy a small country. If she comes back with a scratch, you die...easy?" he said, the creep factor up by the fact that he was still laughing

Alvin frowned. This stranger's way of laughing and threatening on the same breath reminded him too much of that new Berserker chief. "'Ow am I supposed ta make sure this beastie does what I want? Seems like the kinda thing you just point an' release," said Alvin.

The man held up a medallion. "Wear this and it does whatever you want. Just think it," he said calmly. Alvin took and looked at it. The medallion had a clear depiction of the kraken on it. "Mind that you're very specific with what you command it to do," said the stranger, "Magical beasts can be very loose with orders if they're not rigid enough."

Alvin glared "I'm not an idiot, ye know." he snapped, the man saying "Coulda have fooled me."

Alvin picked up the man by his shirt front and said, "Unless you can grow wings quickly, I suggest ya stop egg'in' me on."

The man closed his eyes as he grinned. "Funny you should say that..." he said before opening some eyes that had a significant difference.

"Wot's wrong with your eyes?" demanded Alvin, "Is this some kinda trick?"

"I'm gonna give you a second to put the numbers together; reptile eyes, teeth that could pass for a bear trap..." said the man in a 'talking to 3 year old' voice.

"If you think you can pull yourself off as some 'alf-dragon, you're gonna have to do it ta someone who's more gullible," said Alvin.

The man tilted his head before his shape started to ripple. "Dunno how yer foolin' me eyes, but the only eye yer gonna fool is the fishes' if ya don't stop-" started Alvin before the stranger suddenly surged upward into a dragon's shape and let out a roar that rattled all the loose stones nearby.

There was a small silence as the anthropomorphic dragon the man had become glared. "Would you like to rephrase your previous insult?" it asked in a slightly deeper voice. Alvin fumbled for the medallion but the dragon man said, "Don't bother trying to make the kraken attack me. Its...spell of control prevents that."

Alvin glared as the man said, "My name is Anton, your partner in this little adventure. Do what I need you to do and you'll be the boss. Try to betray me and I'll pick you out of my teeth."

Alvin didn't become the leader of the Outcasts by allowing his nerves to show. "So, ya just want that one she-dragon and none o' the others to be 'urt? Sounds like a good challenge," he said.

"That is correct. But I repeat, mess this up and you die, simple as that," said Anton coldly.

"I suppose you 'ave a particular time in mind for when to release this beastie," said Alvin.

"We're ready. It's all down to you. So get on with it," said Anton coldly.

Alvin turned and bellowed, "Savage!"

Savage quickly ran up to him and asked, "You bellowed, sir?"

"Ready the men," said Alvin, "Today we're giving Berk an attack they ain't gonna forget so easily."

...

"Ok, so kraken don't usually care for explody foxes," said Matt, glaring at the critter which was looking innocently at him...in the fashion that all animals planning mischief do.

"Not unless they've been programmed to do so," said Techo.

"Meaning we got cyber-squid after us, sounds like the monster from a b-movie," said Wilson disgustedly.

"Well, at least that means it's not guarding the others right now," said Chip.

Astrid glared at Chip at that, "Wait...what's that supposed to mean?"

"Well, I've went and had a look at that facility you guys were at," said Chip, "Most of the computers were damaged, but I was able to pull out enough data to know what they've been doing in there."

"And what were they making?" said Matt in a twitchy voice as his temper peaked.

"Apparently this little fellow is one of the products of Project: Carbuncle," said Chip.

"Carbuncle? You mean like the red ugly swollen spot on Draco's butt?" asked Morph. Draco didn't even turn around before squashing Morph's head below his shoulders. "I feel your displeasure," Morph rasped

"Completely different kind of carbuncle," said Chip, "The idea was to make a farmable and renewable energy source. They used some of Malefor's notes for making grublins and combined it with some of their crystals as well as DNA from Petropia."

"Petropia, the Diamondhead world?" asked Draco, "Wasn't that blown up?"

"Obviously this was long before that happened," said Chip in a slightly annoyed tone.

"STAY ON TOPIC!" snapped Matt, causing the carbuncle to explode in Draco's face.

"A fine demonstration as to while the project was abandoned," said Chip, "These carbuncles may be able to generate considerable energy, but they're rather skittish and require a gentle hand. Atlantean scientists weren't all that tender."

"That explains the hole in the wall we saw...but the giant kraken?" said Matt.

"It's of local origin," said Chip, "Normally, the kraken here just stick to their territory and only go out to hunt once a decade or so. But the Atlanteans install implants that could control the kraken, made it their watchdog and retriever."

"Retriever?" said Chloe flatly.

"Yes, the carbuncles have a strong energy signature. They programmed the kraken to follow that signature if one ever got out and bring it back," said Chip.

"Then why did it not crush us into paste and bugger off?" said

Matt.

"That's what I've been trying to figure out," said Chip, "My best guess is someone has overridden its command signals. And I can only think of one person who would have access to that technology."

"Anton, great, a psycho with super squid," snapped Kala.

"Can't you override his override?" asked Chris.

"Not without shutting down his signal," said Chip, "Even then, I don't have the right frequency to keep the kraken from crushing us."

"Damned if you do, damned if you don't..." muttered Matt.

"Is there anything you can do?" asked Chloe.

"Well, I can at least track it," said Chip, "Can't do much to stop it but at least we'll know where it is."

Matt nodded, "Tell me that the ship can at least fly. Laser cannons would be useful."

"Fly? We're barely staying afloat," said Chip, "If we don't get this ship to at least clear us of the sea level, it's going to permanently sink."

"Find a way, it's time we left," snapped Matt.

"Well, there is one way, but it's not going to be straightforward," said Chip, looking at the carbuncle. The carbuncle glared at Chip at that before sending a blast of energy into Chip's mouth. Chip juddered a bit before falling over. "Spicy..." he gasped, letting out a puff of smoke as he talked.

The carbuncle just gave a foxy snigger as everyone glared. "Look, you little fuzzbball, all we need is a jumpstart!" snapped Chloe, losing her cool.

The carbuncle growled at Chloe. "What's wrong with a little positive incentive?" asked Astrid, "I bet it'll get you a lot farther than threatening it. That's why the Atlanteans couldn't get them to work, right?"

"If you help us, we'll let you go," said Matt quickly.

The carbuncle didn't seem impressed by this promise. "We know a much better place for you guys to live," said Kala, "On Avalar, there will be plenty of food for you and no krakens to keep you prisoner."

"And nothing that requires exploding," said Techo chipping in.

The carbuncle looked thoughtful before rubbing its belly. "Really? You want food?" said Matt, facepalming before saying "Ok Draco, everyone knows you guys always have a stash of it. Where's the cake?"

"Hang on now," said Draco, "It's one thing to be offering food to

someone we need help from. But I think that's extending the limits of hospitality too-

"DO IT OR DIE!" yelled Matt.

The experiments lead out a loud groan before Chip says, "I'll go get it."

"Chris, Wilson, make sure they don't get peckish on the way back," said Chloe, causing some tantalog swearwords to occur.

Chloe gave the carbuncle an annoyed look. "I hope you think you're worth it," said Chloe. The carbuncle nodded smugly. "Stupid Voltorb reject," muttered Chloe darkly.

...

Meanwhile, Berk was still in an uproar. Stoick had his hands completely full trying to prevent a riot. "I am not going to send our warriors out after them, Mildew," he snapped, the aforementioned Mildew wearing a smug expression.

"Stoick, it's a matter of village security," said Mildew, "Who knows what those monsters will do know that we know their secret?"

"They had plenty of time to do something all the time they were here," said Stoick in a cold voice.

"Indeed, turning our own children against us," said Mildew.

"What do you mean 'our' children?" snapped Stoick, "You never had children."

"I consider myself fortunate for that," said Mildew, "But it's more worrying that the chief's own son has been swayed to their side."

Stoick glared, getting up to punch Mildew when, luckily for Mildew, Gobber came in. "Stoick, Alvin's here!" called Gobber.

Stoick gave a groan of frustration and said, "Could this day get any worse?"

Stoick and the others went outside. Alvin was very easy to standing at the prow of his ship. "'Ello Stoick, I was just in the neighbor'ood an' I thought I'd stop by and see if you'd like to surrender," called Alvin.

"I think you know the answer, Alvin!" yelled back Stoick.

"Oh, well I guess I'll 'ave ta show you me new weapon that'll smash Berk to pieces until ya give me wot I want," called Alvin.

"What, you gone and caught a dragon that's dumb enough to listen to you?" called Gobber which made many Vikings laugh.

Alvin grinned and said, "Better," before holding up his medallion, "Alright beastie, give 'em somethin' ta scream about!" The deep horn-like noise was heard before some...thing surfaced slowly in front of the outcast fleet before a tentacle shot up out the

water.

There was a pause of shock before several villagers started screaming and running from where the tentacle was about to smack down.

Stoick glared, whistling to summon Thornado. The Thunderdrum quickly soared up to Stoick who landed on its back. "Let's see how much this monster likes loud noises," said Stoick before Thornado flew at the kraken and let out a sonic roar. The kraken slowly turned in place, one of its eyes glaring at the annoying dragon as it roared before it swiped at it.

"Uh, Alvin, sir," said Salvage, "Didn't that fellow who gave us that medallion say we're not supposed to hurt the dragons?"

"What he doesn't know won't hurt him," said Alvin smirking as the kraken took another swipe at the Thunderdrum and its rider.

"Sir, isn't it odd that Stoick's boy isn't flying up there too? He's usually the first to fly in," said Savage.

"Yeah, that is unusual. The little brat's usually first in," said Alvin thoughtfully.

"Maybe he's not here right now," said Savage.

"Maybe, but that don't mean you lot get to sit around and watch," said Alvin, "Get to shore, all of ya! We got lootin' ta do!" There was already some of the old catapults firing at the kraken which wasn't even noticing the hits unless it spotted a shot incoming.

"Sir, won't our ally be mad if we don't bring him his dragon?" asked Savage.

"Tell you wot, if we don't get that dragon today, we'll come back tomorrow and every day after that till it shows up," said Alvin, "Now stop question' me orders or you'll be feedin' the kraken."

...

"It's back," called a tech, pointing to a console.

Matt and Chloe ran up to look at the readout. "Ok...where is our octopus friend?" he asked.

"At Berk," said the tech grimly.

"Great...well, our cover's toast anyway. Chris, you're going to Berk," Matt said.

"Me? Against a sea monster with hundred-foot long tentacles?" asked Chris with obvious reluctance.

"Take as many men as you want and some of the railguns," said Matt.

"Matt, we have to go too," said Hiccup.

"Against a cyber-kraken? Probably upgraded with all kinda nasty things by the Atlanteans? Probably has atomic breath?" snapped Matt.

"Scans indicate that no further modification was made to the kraken besides the control implants," said Chip.

"And when has that ever been accurate?" said Matt darkly.

"Guys, we can discuss battle strategies later," said Kala, "Right now, me and Matt need to get flying."

"No, you're staying here," said Matt.

Kala snapped "Hey, I am not staying here! I don't need to be on a leash..." only for Matt to say "Sure, let's make it easy for a Shar-Virk like Anton to see where you live."

"You really think Anton would stop me? I know what's going. You're doing it again," said Kala.

"Doing what?" asked Matt.

"Keeping me back, making me stay out of the action because you don't think I'm ready. Why must you keep putting obstacles in front of me?"

"No, I lost you once to those psychos, never again!" snapped Matt, nobody noticing the kids leaving.

As the crew started to argue, Astrid said to Hiccup, "They're not going to let us go anyways, are they?"

"Not likely," admitted Hiccup.

"But we're still going, right?"

"Absolutely, get everyone together. We need to be at least halfway to Berk before they catch up."

...

Kala roared in Matt's face, "I'm not some invalid! I can look after myself you...you..."

Matt glared and said "Go on, say it."

"Ika pachooga!" snapped Kala.

Matt snarled at that, the leftover EXP virus in his DNA helpfully translating for him. "Can't you see I'm trying to protect you, ika toobaga?" snapped Matt.

"Protect me? More like letting no one take your property!" snapped Kala.

Matt's eyes got a crazy shine to them at that. "You want a solo shot? The door's that way. Don't expect help though," he said in a low voice.

"Fine, I will!" snapped Kala before marching out the door.

Matt glared before turning to the others. "WHAT?" he snapped.

"Gee, it's hard to decide where to start," said Chloe dryly.

"Then don't...where are the kids?" snapped Matt, pausing before saying the rest.

"I think they slipped out at some point prior to the collar part," said NegaMorph, "I wasn't pay attention to them before that."

"Why didn't you say something?!" yelled Matt.

"And interrupt this turning point in your relationship? Besides, I probably couldn't have been able to make you pay attention if I was using a loudspeaker."

"Goddammit, we'd better go," he began before there was a shaking, "Don't tell me the kraken has a brother."

"Intruder alert...surface entrance two has been brea-arrgh!" came a cry over the comms.

"Not a kraken, it would have made a lot more background noise," said Chip, "But the only other people on this planet who would be able to breach our security would be..."

...

OmegaMorph grinned as three of Matt's men fired point blank at him, the rounds bouncing or going through him harmlessly. "Is it my turn now?" he said with a smirk. He took in a deep breath before letting out a freezing blast of wind which froze Matt's men where they stood. He was tempted to use something hotter, but having the iceberg melt around him would make finding things irksomely difficult.

A whirring noise got his attention, a strange prong like gun unfolding from the ceiling before hitting him with a sonic blast. OmegaMorph gave the sonic emitter an annoyed look and said, "That's giving me an earache." He pointed a hand at it and let loose an electric blast that fired the weapon.

He grinned as the droids in his team charged past him before sighing as Anton commed him. "Are we having fun? Remember, Silvia is to be recovered...and don't let any of them leave. I'm busy enough making sure that idiot, Alvin follows our orders."

"Yeah, sure, grab the girl then sink the ship," said OmegaMorph, "It'd be a lot more fun if she had gone out to help with your loaned sea monster."

"Just get on with it or I'll damn well lobotomize you with that collar," snapped Anton.

"Fine, fine, anything else I'm supposed to grab? A bottle of milk perhaps?" asked OmegaMorph sarcastically.

"Just get Miss Lynch. I think Kala's on her way to my location so I'll handle that. Think you can grab one person?" said Anton

sarcastically.

OmegaMorph glared and said "Yes." before Anton added "Oh, watch out for the spiders." before signing off.

OmegaMorph looked confused, saying "What? I can handle some tiny spiders." It was this point that the universe decided to have the spiderbots cut his arms off and run off with them. OmegaMorph regrew his arms and said, "So these are the infamous spiderbots? I expected them to be flashier."

He turned as he heard a rumble before whimpering as a literal wall of spiderbots descended on him.

...

While Matt would have flown after the kids before they got to Berk, the Imperial troopers demanded immediate personal attention.

"This is too convenient," he said, punching out a trooper before spinning and shooting a droid

"Looks like a classic divisionary tactic," said Chloe, "Divide and conquer. Anton must have arranged for the kraken to attack Berk."

"I'd ask how, but this isn't the best time to be asking questions," said Chip as he shorted out another droid.

"Someone called...Chris," began Matt before the shorted-out comm tower fell down, where several droids had wrecked it.

"Do you have any idea how long it took me to get that operational?!" yelled Chip before grabbing an axe one of the kids left behind and proceeded to do a different type of hacking on the droids.

"Chip, could you fix the comms?" asked Matt carefully, yelping as Chip threw an arm at him.

"I think he's too wrapped up with righteous vengeance right now," said Chloe.

"We gotta get to Berk...now," said Techo nervously.

"And allow these jerks the run of the base?" asked Matt disgustedly.

"Kala's gone to Berk," said Chloe faintly.

That made Matt change his tone. "Right, let's not waste time with the cannon fodder. Only Anton and OmegaMorph are the credible threats here. Once we get those creeps to leave, we're heading to Berk and we're gonna serve everyone more calamari than they can eat."

...

Anton and several of his men were standing on one of the rock towers, watching the fight. "It's...beautiful to watch," he said with a smile.

"Damn creepy if you ask me," said one of the troopers, "I hate squids."

"Don't worry, as soon as that idiots got what we want, we'll have it eat him," said Anton calmly.

"Like that's gonna make sleeping easier," said the trooper with a shudder.

"Then don't sleep. Just have the stasis rifles ready, they're coming," said Anton, staring out to sea.

The dropship wasn't quite the most impressive ship to use for first contact, but it was more than enough to grab all the villagers' attention. Especially when it opened up and the dragon riders on their dragons flew out.

Chris and his own team walked down the ramp, blasting away at the Outcast invaders with stun rifles. "The cavalry's arrived," Chris called with a smug voice. The kraken immediately started swiping at the newcomers, but it seemed to hesitate with attacking the dragons.

Chris punched out an Outcast before seeing Mildew was the one he'd saved. "Aw...did it have to be you?" he asked gloomily.

"Don't think I'm happy to see you," said Mildew, "None of this chaos would be happening if you lot weren't here."

Chris sighed. "Huh...we could always just toss you to the...hold that thought," he said as several Outcasts ran at him before shifting to his werewolf form and pummeling them into the happy land of unconsciousness. Chris turned around without shifting back and said, "Now, where was I?" He looked down to see Mildew was lying on his back with a shock expression on his face. For a moment, Chris hoped he had a heart attack, but a sniff confirmed that he had just fainted.

"We gonna shoot him?" asked a trooper hopefully.

"Unfortunately, he's a timeline specific," said Chris, "Not a major player, but enough to cause a continuity snarl if we get rid of him."

"Aw..." complained another trooper, though one gave Mildew a sharp kick before they headed back out.

The Outcasts gave the troopers very little trouble but the kraken's tentacles swatting at them was a much greater threat. Kala glared, spitting another plasma bolt at it, causing it to growl. The kraken seemed to focus on Kala, though it seemed to be trying to grab her than crush her.

Luckily, Toothless got a good shot in, one of the metal components exploding. The reaction on the kraken was quite obvious as it roared in pain before it stopped.

...

Remote connection lost...all remote units offline...

Switching to internal programming...recovery of project components

ALERY: Assault underway by indigenous forces

Reaction: Non-lethal neutralization

...

"Hey, I ain't called for a snack break yet!" yelled Alvin, "Keep smashin' them 'ouses!"

The kraken instead slowly turned to fix its angry eyes for a minute, fixing its eyes on the human that had been ordering it around before it lifted up a tentacle and brought it down on the center of its boat, the kraken turning its attention back to the flying reptiles harassing it.

Alvin and Savage were flung clear from the wreck and landed on another Outcast ship. "Uh, sir, I think your talisman might be losing its effect," said Savage.

The kraken turned to face the dragons angrily before several rocks shot in their direction, each rock easily the size of Hookfang. The dragons quickly took evasive action which wasn't easy considering that the kraken's other tentacles were still swiping at them and this time there didn't seem to be hesitation in attacking them.

Kala glared doing several dodges as all the frustration from this adventure bubbled up. "Treating me like a pet...having to carry him everywhere...CAN'T GET ONE SIMPLE GUESSING GAME STRAIGHT!" snapped Kala as she blasted at the kraken.

A piece of granite shot past her head at that, though she barely noticed from sheer rage overload before she saw a much larger piece heading for her, a brief look behind proving an equally large bit was headed for her from behind. "Uh oh," said Kala before flying upwards, but the rocks clashed against the tip of her wing. She roared in pain before the rocks released her wing, sending her into a tailspin towards the water. "C'mon, c'mon, getting working, wing," she said desperately as she tried to get her wing to respond right.

On cue, a blur shot out of nowhere, grabbing her. Kala gave a sigh of relief. "Thanks, I'm almost willing to forgive your behavior earlier," she said.

"Oh, so kind," said Anton's voice in her ear with a sneer before saying before she could start to struggle, "I wouldn't struggle, falling from this height, you'd get less damage hitting rock. Of course, even if you make a safe splash landing, you know it's not a good idea to be swimming right now."

"Wh...what do you want?" said Kala in a worried voice.

"Oh not much, but Dr. Johnson has missed you so much," sneered Anton.

Kala snarled and said, "I'm not his little lab experiment

anymore."

"Oh no, no, you have become so much more than that. You're much more valuable than a science project. Why, I'd say you were general material," said Anton.

Kala whimpered at that as Anton continued, "Oh it won't be that bad. You won't miss Lynch for a start."

Just then, a small shower of laser beams and sharp fangs forced Anton to pause in midflight. "You will not have her!" roared NegaMorph as he swooped at him.

Anton sighed to himself before grinning as a tentacle slapped NegaMorph flying. "You need to work on your timing," he called. NegaMorph would have flown right back up there and attacked Anton again, but the tentacle had attached more than a few suction cups to him, including his face.

Anton just laughed. "Be sure to thank Lynch for handing our new general to us," he called.

NegaMorph thrashed to escape, but the suction cups were too powerful. However, NegaMorph's tail was free and it was able to lash around. Eventually, one lucky lash managed to cut into the tentacle beneath him and he then started focusing on hacking at the pseudopod. All that happened was that the kraken tossed him in the direction of the town in annoyance.

Normally, NegaMorph would use this opportunity to get back into the air and fly after Anton, but he was having trouble seeing where he was going and thus didn't make himself fluid enough when he crashed into the wall. "Ow," he groaned before sliding down the wall.

...

"Sir, might I suggest that we withdraw?" asked Savage, "I think we've done enough damage to Berk and it'll give Stoick to consider his surrender."

Alvin looked at the damage the now rampaging kraken was causing. "I like that idea," he said gruffly before everyone but him jumped as a tentacle just missed their ship. "Well, ya want another tentacle slam? Get this ship sailin'!" snapped Alvin.

The crew immediately ran to their stations to get the ship moving as fast as they could...only for a tentacle to grab Alvin. To Alvin's credit, he didn't panic. "Get yer slimy tentacles off me!" yelled Alving, pounding at the kraken with his free arm. The kraken pulled the Outcast up to one eye, its iris narrowing angrily before it carefully reached out and pulled the control 'amulet off' holding it up for Alvin to see before crushing it easily.

Now Alvin started to worry that he'd end up inside the kraken's stomach. The kraken itself seemed to consider this, opening its maw before it made the monster equivalent of 'meh' and tossed Alvin in the direction of his ship

"Boss?" began Savage before a rock narrowly missed the ship,

providing the reason.

"Get movin' or you can stay behind and keep the beastie busy," snapped Alvin.

...

The kraken watched as the ship left before it slowly descended back down, ripples the only sign that it was leaving. It had a subject to recover

With the kraken and the Outcasts departing, the battle appeared to be over. Well...apart from the angry mob. "Erm...get the feeling we're not gonna get a thank you?" said one of Chris's men as attention turned to them.

"Ideally, we really ought to, but ideals aren't reality," said Chris.

"Hey, stop," called Hiccup, landing between the mob and the gang.

"Listen to the kid please," yelled Chris.

"These guys might not have told the truth about where they're from, but can we deny that they've been helping us out as often as they could?" asked Hiccup, "They didn't have to come back, especially after we treated them earlier, but they did so anyways."

"So...ye on their side too?" said Mildew with a smirk before paling as someone said "Boo." Mildew yelled and tripped over his staff, causing him to land in a manure cart.

The others jumped back to see a familiar, at least to the gang, anthro dragon. "If we hadn't wanted to play nice, we would have massacred you all weeks ago," snapped Matt, "But frankly, I don't care two figs whether you're here or not. Where's Kala?"

"Who's Kala?" asked a Viking safely at the back of the crowd

"My girlfriend I've been trying to find for weeks who I've found out is actually Starflame about a week or two ago," said Matt.

The Vikings all got skeptical looks but who was going to argue on what could pass as a monster from hell. "We didn't see yer Starflame," snapped Mildew rudely only to be lifted up effortlessly.

"Kala risked her own life just now, without prompting, so you yahoos owe her enough for you to start looking for her," said Matt in a false calm tone.

Mildew just said "Ye don't scare me." only to scream as Matt roared in his face.

"Now then, let's start looking for Kala as well as anyone else who's currently missing," said Matt. Mildew glared but noticed that everyone seemed to be suddenly against helping him.

"If nothing else, he's right about one thing," said Stoick, "We need

to find out who has been hurt during the attack. Everyone start looking."

Matt turned to his men. "You heard him, spread out and see to casualties."

The damage to the village was pretty grim. Many buildings had been smashed and there were more than a few villagers found under the debris. Fortunately, so far they were all alive, though some had some broken bones.

"Any sign of Kala?" asked Matt after a while.

"Not yet, but we did find this," said Chris, holding up what appeared to be NegaMorph. However, he had pretty mangled by the tentacle and the crash. His face in particular had been warped into an indiscernible lump of flesh.

Matt glared before flexing his claw and squashing NegaMorph into a perfect ball before stretching him back out, NegaMorph looking dazed. "Someone get the license plate of that particle accelerator?" asked NegaMorph in a dazed tone.

"Where's Kala, you licorice reject?" snapped Matt, shaking him.

"She's been under your nose this whole time, you moron," said NegaMorph, "Haven't you noticed the similarities between her and Starflame?"

Matt glared before yelling "I ALREADY KNOW THAT, YOU MORON! WHERE IS HER CURRENT GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION?"

NegaMorph's eyes focused and he immediately started to struggle in Chris's hands. "Let me go, I need to get back up there and save Kala," he snapped.

"Bit late for that," growled Matt, his hand heating up.

NegaMorph looked crestfallen at that. "I'm sorry, Matt, I did what I could, but the kraken got in the way."

"Fine...where...is...she?" said Matt, squeezing and causing NegaMorph to make a squeaky toy noise.

"With...Anton..." wheezed NegaMorph.

"And he is where?" snapped Matt.

"I don't know," said NegaMorph, "I tried to fly after him but the kraken grabbed me." Matt glared before throwing NegaMorph aside and roaring angrily.

"What's up with him?" asked Gobber who had walked over.

"You remember how he was looking for his lost girlfriend when we first arrived?" asked Chris, "Turns out she was actually his dragon and now she's been kidnapped by a particularly nasty character."

There was an awkward silence before Chris said "Magic spell accident." before sighing as there seemed to be a sudden sense of relief.

"I'm truly sorry for his loss," said Stoick, "Plenty of us know what it's like to lose a loved one. However, I am a bit worried that he's about to let out his anger on the town."

"Believe me, if he had lost control, we'd be ash by now," said Chris before jumping as Matt stomped up.

"Those morons that were with Anton and the kraken, who were they?" demanded Matt.

"Why should we tell you?" asked Mildew.

Matt's expression and scale color darkened as he growled, "Because if you don't, I'll start listening to my natural instincts and EAT YOU!"

Mildew didn't back down this time...until Matt had to be grabbed by Chris to stop him lunging. "They're called the Outcasts," said Stoick sternly once Matt had calmed down.

"So? Where do they live?" said Matt icily.

"Outcast Island," said Gobber, "Not a pleasant place what with the wild dragons attacking all the time. Probably the second reason they want to come and take over Berk, besides from the whole revenge about banishment thing."

"When I'm finished with them..." began Matt before pausing, "I'll make sure that Anton's chased off."

"If Anton's even there," said NegaMorph, "Sounds like he's just using Alvin as a distraction. A distraction with a colossal sea monster for an attack dog."

"Then he will tell me everything," said Matt darkly, taking off.

Chris summed up the collective thought, "Well, shit."

"Don't be silly, we haven't gotten to the worst part yet," said NegaMorph.

"What worst part?" asked Chris.

Just then, one of the villagers pointed at NegaMorph and yelled, "Demon!" which soon spooked up the mob and made them draw their weapons.

"This is the worst part," said NegaMorph before they descended on him.

...

Anton grinned, sitting in front of Kala at the Outcast camp while they waited for a ship to arrive. He was already making a start on her, a small organic-looking circlet around her head and crackling.

"Now please, I have to say I'm impressed. Chloe was screaming by this point," he said with a sneer, activating the circlet again, which caused Kala's pain centers to flare. Kala gritted her teeth before trying to shoot a fireball at him.

Anton just laughed at that before Alvin came in, clearly in a bad mood. "Yer stupid talisman didn't work," he snapped.

"Have you tried shaking it? You shouldn't try to bang it too much," said Anton dismissively.

"Yer beastie smashed it," snapped Alvin, holding up an axe.

"Then apparently it didn't care for the way you were bossing it around," said Anton.

Alvin glared and aimed a blow only for a red beam to decapitate his axe, the outcast spinning to see a metallic golem in the corner. "Take the hint," sneered Anton.

"No one double-crosses Alvin the Treacherous!" snapped Alvin.

"Fine, but my droids are all over your little village and if I so much as sneeze, they'll kill everyone," said Anton calmly, adding, "Look on the bright side, I've decided to overlook the fact that you let the kraken attack the dragons and pay you anyway for services rendered."

"Pay me 'ow?" asked Alvin.

"Gold? Jewels? Whatever you idiots like?" said Anton, turning back to Kala.

"Gold would be nice, but I'll need another kraken amulet," said Alvin.

Anton sighed. "Well that's a shame. It was a one-time offer, emphasis on 'one time'. The te...magic used to make the amulet means it's irreplaceable," he said.

"Well, the 'Ooligans on Berk won't know that, will they?" said Alvin, "They've already had a taste of the kraken's might an' they won't be wantin' more."

"Your funeral," said Anton calmly, before turning on the circlet again, this time getting a screech out of Kala that actually made Alvin wince.

"None of me business, o' course, but why are ye torturin' that Night Fury like that?" asked Alvin.

"It's a little project. She's someone I know. I'm just...bringing her to my way of seeing things," said Anton with a sinisterly cheerful tone.

Alvin grimaced and said, "I prefer me own point o' view. 'Ow you gonna keep 'er 'ere? Some people 'ave to sleep, you know."

"My people are coming to get me. In an hour me and she will be gone," said Anton, adding, "Her companion will be coming. You can kill him

if you want."

"I gotta get back ta Berk. Need to strike while the iron's still hot," said Alvin.

"No, you go out against Lynch and he'll tear you to bloody ribbons. You want him to come to you. He has a habit of running headlong into deathtraps," scolded Anton.

"An' what deathtrap would work on 'im?" asked Alvin.

"You want to hit him with overwhelming firepower, don't try fire. He'll walk through it with a sneer. Blunt force would work," said Anton thoughtfully, grinning at Kala, "We even have bait."

Alvin eyed Kala and said, "If yer gonna be twistin' 'er mind around, what not make 'er the deathtrap?"

Anton broke into a grin at that "That's the most intelligent thing I've heard you say..." he said, turning to grin at Kala who whimpered weakly before he turned the device up to full...

...

Matt landed on the Outcast dock, looking around angrily. "Come out, come out wherever you are," he called, sending a plasma blast into a docked and empty longboat. "I can keep doing this to every flimsy little structure you've got," called Matt as he threw another plasma ball at a hut.

A second later, a large rock was fired from a catapult at him, Matt calmly blasting it to gravel. "Is that the best you can do?" Matt yelled, aiming a blast at another hut.

An axe-wielding Outcast charged at Matt with a loud battlecry but that battlecry soon turned into a high-pitched squeal when Matt kicked in the 'no fair' zone with enough force to send him flying over his head.

"NEXT!" called Matt, walking on and blasting another Outcast as it charged. This time, a whole wave of Outcasts came charging out, but they quickly turned tail when Matt made a wall of plasma flames spring up.

"GET OUT HERE AND FACE ME OR I'LL TURN THIS ENTIRE ISLAND INTO HEATED GLASS!" yelled Matt.

Then Alvin stepped forward with a large sword in his hand. "You're an impressive warrior alright," said Alvin, "But this is my island an' no dragon trashes it and gets away with it."

"You took Kala?" said Matt, not turning around.

"Nah, that be me tenant," said Alvin, "If ya be 'ere to cause trouble for 'im, I'd 'ave let you pass if ya didn't blast me huts."

"You were stupid enough to side with him. Now Matt's a calm...collected kind of person, but I'm not...and he's actually let me out willingly," said 'Matt' starting to get a crazy giggle in his voice.

"You some kinda berserker?" asked Alvin, "Ye look like ye could be a cousin of that cuckoo Dagur."

Matt just started laughing psychotically before spinning and lunging at Alvin. Alvin swung with his sword, but Matt just caught it with his hand and there was barely a trickle of blood.

"I'm a whole different breed," laughed 'Matt', not even caring that blood was pouring down the blade now before he kicked Alvin in the chest.

Alvin flew back and landed near a rack of weapons. He got back up, picked up a large sledgehammer and said, "If yer skin can be cut, then yer bones can break." He swung the hammer at Matt's head.

Matt ducked the blow before being knocked over by the backswing. "Ow...well color me impressed," he sneered, aiming a slash with the claws out. Alvin ducked back but the slash made contact with the head of the sledgehammer and gouged out a series of scratches. This was proved as Matt yelped before taking a deep breath and sending a blast of plasma fire at the Outcast.

The plasma melted the head off the sledgehammer which Alvin threw aside. "Oh, so ya wanna get rough, do ya?" he said before decking Matt.

Matt's head whipped to the side before slowly turning back, a small bruise appearing but that was it. "My turn," he said before dealing a punch of his own. The punch actually made Alvin sail through the air in a big arc before crashing onto a hut that hadn't been torched. "And I didn't even eat any spinach to do that," said Matt cheerfully.

He turned before heading for the hut that the outcasts seemed to have been blocked before blowing the hinges off to see Kala slumped in the middle of a room "Kala!" cried Matt before he ran over to her, "Kala, wake up, I know you're not dead."

Kala opened her eyes before saying slowly, "You came...idiot." her voice turning into a sneer before Matt was sent sailing by a plasma bolt.

Matt sat up and asked, "You're not still fuming from our little spat earlier, are you?"

"No, I'm just going to kill you," said Kala, shimmering before turning into a red eyed version of her human form.

"Kala, you've broken out of your encoding, that's wonderful," said Matt, though his joy sounded a little feigned, "You know what, before you decide to let your anger out, you should do a few things for yourself. You know, take a shower, get some fresh clothes, walk around Berk..."

"Kala's not home," said 'Kala' angrily.

"Wait, weren't you poisoned or something and made too weak to take control ever again?" asked Matt.

"We come back," sneered Kai.

"And here I thought you'd be the safest one of us," said Matt, "You know I've beaten you before, Kai."

"True, but you won't...and risk hurting dear Kala?" laughed Kai.

"It takes a lot to hurt us," said Matt.

"Well, how's this? I'm going with Anton," laughed Kala.

Matt winced and said, "Ok, I'll admit that hurt. But I'm not gonna allow that to happen."

Tough," sneered Kai as a blaster was pointed in Matt's ear.

"Oh, thanks, I've had this nasty waxy build-up and there are no Q-tips on this planet," said Matt before firing a blast to his side. There was a squashing noise before he was sent flying, "OmegaMorph."

"Lynch, I have to say, you have good taste in girls," said OmegaMorph's voice, "I don't care a bit about what she looks like, but she's a pyromaniac to be admired."

Matt glared, trying to get back up and failing. "You know...maybe I'll put you out my misery?" said Kai, walking forward.

"Aw, don't you still carry a torch? Not even for Draconus?" asked Matt.

Matt twitched at that before Draconus took control and he snapped, "Yeah...why have I gotta die too?"

Kai paused to think about it before asking, "What do you think, Anton? Should we keep Draconus?"

Anton looked at Matt, "I think the Emperor will want to deal with him personally."

"Of course he would, I'd be insulted if anyone in a lesser position did it," said Draconus before Matt took back control and snapped, "Not helping."

"OmegaMorph, kindly sedate him," said Anton calmly

"With pleasure," said OmegaMorph as his claws stretched out to needle points.

...

Chloe glared as Chris got off the dropship. "Ok...where is my idiot brother?" she said coldly.

"Most likely on Outcast Island," said Chris.

"Ok...why?" said Chloe, her tone indicating she was close to a mental eruption.

"Because he wanted to roast their leader, Alvin, for info about where

Anton took Kala," said Chris.

"Ok...ok," said Chloe before yelling "AND YOU DIDN'T FOLLOW HIM?!"

"Well, we had to calm down the villager before they went on the warpath and help clean up the town," said Chris, "But I had NegaMorph tail Matt. If things get too hot, he'll haul him back."

"You sure about that? That mk 2 version of him's running around," said Techo.

"A good reason for NegaMorph to pull the lifeline quickly," said Chris, "He won't stick around if OmegaMorph shows up and he'll be dragging Matt behind him."

"And if OmegaMorph's got Matt?" said Chloe.

"Hopefully NegaMorph will be quicker," said Chris.

On cue a shadow portal began to open. "Finally...Matt, you'd better have a good ide...NegaMorph, where's my brother?" Chloe said.

"In Anton's clutches," said NegaMorph apologetically.

"Why didn't you GET HIM?" snapped Chloe.

"Because he was in OmegaMorph's grasp before I could get to him," said NegaMorph.

"And you didn't even TRY?" snapped Chloe.

"If I tried, I would have disintegrated and we'd still not have either Matt or Kala," said NegaMorph.

A growl from Chloe provided that this was not a passable excuse in Chloe's book

"Chloe, calm down," said Chris, "Try to look at the big picture."

"The big picture?" asked Chloe scathingly, "Our ship and only means of leaving this planet is sinking, the carbuncle who could boost its power won't cooperate, everyone on Berk knows our secret and are one bad move from declaring war on us, Anton's buddies with the local warlord and has both Matt and Kala captive with the intent of making them new generals for the Hamsterviel Army. Does that cover everything in the big picture?"

"Now that you say it like that..." began Chris as Chloe rounded again on NegaMorph. "You are going to warp us all to outside that village...and you are coming along..." she hissed angrily.

Just then, a rumble shook the iceberg and caused everyone to be knocked off their feet. "Let me guess, the iceberg is sinking more," said Chloe.

NegaMorph looked at the frothing sea surface and said, "No, much worse."

"Oh no," muttered Chloe before an alarm sounded. "Breach...launch bay," said the automated PA.

"No time to lose," said Chloe, "If we lose that carbuncle, we're sunk."

Just then, several writhing tentacles burst up out of the water like a twisted forest sprouting in an instance. "I think we might be sunk either way," said NegaMorph. The tentacles all bended forward before falling towards the iceberg like a deadly tsunami.

...

The carbuncle was sitting on the top of the old battlecruiser as the kraken tore the door open like it was paper. "You took your time," it said calmly as the kraken peered in and made a rumbling growl. "Oh, don't give me that excuse," scolded the carbuncle. A tentacle slithered its way in and started coiling around the carbuncle.

"Hold it, these people deserve something for actually holding me this long," said the carbuncle, the tentacle pausing before the carbuncle sent a blast of energy in the direction of the stacks of ignition crystals, re-energizing them.

Once the carbuncle had finished the tentacle lashed and out and grabbed the carbuncle with a suction cup before dragging it back out. "Hey, careful!" it snapped as the gang charged in, the carbuncle laughing as Chloe gave it a farewell selection of swearwords.

Fortunately, once the kraken had the carbuncle, it lost interest in the rest of the crew. The tentacles all withdrew except for the one that was keeping the carbuncle above the water. Chloe just stared as Techo examined the rejuvenated starter crystals before she said dully "What the hell just happened?"

"The kraken got what it came for and left," said Techo, "And it seems our little buddy has left us a parting gift that's not a bomb for once."

"Tell me that it lets the ship take off," said Chloe.

"These crystals seem fully charged so they should be enough to get us airborne," said Techo, "Getting into space may be a hassle, but we've been expecting that."

"Get em ready," said Chloe.

"Chloe, as much as I'd like to fly this ship at Anton, guns a-blasting, you know that won't be enough to stop OmegaMorph," said Techo.

"They're not getting my brother," snapped Chloe.

"Of course they're not, but we need a better way of getting him out of there," said Techo.

"Fine...you got an idea?" said Chloe angrily

"Uh...round up the dragons on Dragon Island and have them assault

Outcast Island all at once?" suggested Techo.

"Fine, you wanna volunteer to get them to come?" said Chloe

"Er, that sounds more like a job for Hiccup and his crew," said Techo.

"Great, this will go well," muttered Chris.

...

Trying to ask for Hiccup's help was difficult from the getgo. They couldn't even speak to Hiccup without having to go through Stoick first.

"Yer not speaking to my son!" snapped Stoick for the umpteenth time, Chloe glaring as her patience began to wear thin and she tried to explain again.

"Look, it's very important. My brother is at stake and Hiccup is a very important part of getting him free. So may I please, please, please...how many times I've asked plus 1 just talk to him?" asked Chloe.

Stoick glared before sighing. "Just a talk," he said, stepping aside.

Chloe gave a sigh of relief before going up to Hiccup's room. "I think I've repeated myself enough for you to get an idea of what I need from you," she said.

Hiccup sighed, having overheard, Toothless simply watching from the corner. "You want us to attack the Outcasts?" he said skeptically.

"Well, pretty much, not necessarily you, but driving the dragons from Dragon Island might do it," said Chloe.

"A lot of them could be hurt, killed or caught," said Hiccup carefully.

"Well, it'll be for a greater cause?" suggested Chloe. Hiccup just give her a cold look before Chloe snapped, "Ok, so I don't have a better idea! The ship can take off, but with OmegaMorph there, it'll be an easy target! I can't think of anything else that might work!" Hiccup sighed as Chloe said "Look, they're gonna do to my brother what they...did to me. Please, I can't let that happen."

"Chloe, I really do want to help, but we need an idea that isn't half-baked," said Hiccup.

"Then you tell me something, cause I'm at a loss," said Chloe in a defeated tone.

Just then, someone knocked on the front door. The two of them looked downstairs to see Stoick open the door. It was impossible to see beyond his broad back, but they could clearly hear Morph's voice saying, "Hello, me and my friends are going on an important rescue mission. Would you like to make a contribution?"

"Ok...what's the blob doing?" she said dully, facepalming.

"Your friend's already here to plead your case," said Stoick in an annoyed tone.

"Oh good, which friend is that?" asked Morph.

Chloe yelled, "MORPH, GET BACK TO THE SHIP RIGHT NOW, YOU LITTLE MARSHMALLOW OF HEADACHES!"

"Hi, Chloe, you helping out the good cause too?" asked Morph.

"I'd hardly call a suicide attack on Outcast Island a good cause," said Stoick sternly.

"Oh, you're doing that rescue mission?" asked Morph, "I thought you came here for my rescue mission."

Chloe glared, a small Morph-sized cloud forming just over the oblivious experiment before he was struck by a dozen or so high voltage thunderbolts. "But it's for a good cause," said Morph dizzily, "Somebody's gotta rescue the little guys."

Chloe sighed, saying "Who do you think we're rescuing, Morph?"

"You're freeing Matt and Kala and I'm freeing the carbuncles," said Morph.

Chloe actually spasmed at that from sheer stupid overexposure. "We're not freeing those kamikaze fixes...are we clear?" she said.

Now, if Morph's brain actually worked, he would have taken this lifeline to avoid pain...sadly this was Morph. "Is that a 'maybe'?"

...

The resulting thunderclap was actually heard on Outcast Island...

"Blimey, what was that?" asked one of the Outcast guards.

"Sounds like a pretty bad storm," said another guard.

"Hate to be on which ever island that storm's heading for," said the first guard.

...

Chloe sighed and said, "I feel so much better now without all that frustration. Sorry about the roof."

"That's fine," said Stoick carefully, Morph happily saying from his new crater "Does anyone smell s'mores?"

"Now then, have I made myself clear about the carbuncles?" asked Chloe.

"But we already got a boat and everything," said Morph.

"'We'?" asked Chloe. Draco flew through the hole in the roof and said, "Let me guess, we won't be getting much support from the chief."

"DRACO! I expected more IQ from you to actually go along on a Morph plan," scolded Chloe as the Vikings stared in shock at him.

"I thought he couldn't talk," said a Viking at the back

"There's a lot weirder stuff you guys haven't learned yet," said Chloe before saying to Draco, "Who else is in on this mad scheme?"

"Well...pretty much all the experiments," said Draco, "Chip says he's too busy and I think Megan and Gary are going to help as well."

"I'm going to kill them," said Chloe to herself in a sweet voice, even smiling before she said, "Is there any way we can stop you committing grand theft fox?"

"But those guys deserve to be free," said Morph, "They're no different from us experiments. Those dumb Atlanteans guys created them for their own selfish reasons and they didn't really care about them. Then they leave them trapped on this world with a big mean octopus to keep them from going anywhere. They should be free to do whatever they want and not spend all their lives in a cave. They need to be rescued."

Chloe stared for a minute before she said, "Have you plugged your brain in?"

"I dunno, let me check," said Morph sticking his arm up his nose. Chloe and the others grimaced before Morph pulled his hand out, "Nope, still unplugged."

"So you're gonna rescue the carbuncles with a boat," said Chloe dryly, "Aren't you forgetting about their 20-armed guardian?"

"Maybe we can free the kraken too," said Morph.

"That depends, does it want to be freed?" said Chloe

"Well, it probably doesn't like have all those implants telling it what to do," said Draco, "And it would probably be really grateful if we got rid of them."

"Fine, but no bringing back pets, am I perfectly clear? And if it looks like it's going pear shaped, LEAVE!" said Chloe, pointedly.

"No problem," said Morph, "Just a little voyage with my best buddies and even Gobber."

"Gobber?" asked Stoick.

"Yeah, he's right over there," said Morph, pointing.

Hiccup looked where he was pointing and said, "Morph, that's not Gobber, that's just a walrus that's wearing a helmet like

his."

Morph paused and turned around to look at the walrus in the face who simply belched loudly. "The resemblance is uncanny," said Morph.

"Just go...the walrus will probably be the most sensible person in this endeavor," said Chloe icily.

"Okey-dokey," said Morph before hopping on the walrus's back and shouting, "Go Gobber 2!" Several villagers stared as Morph rode the walrus towards the harbor.

"This is our life. Don't curse us, we already have a curse of stupid on board," said Chloe casually.

Stoick sighed before asking, "So how is his...plan less mad than yours?"

"We are going in with weapons," said Chloe grimly.

"Somewhat better, but still sounds soft in the middle. You better let me have a look at these plans of yours," said Stoick.

"Dad, are you saying you're gonna be going with us?" asked Hiccup.

"It's the best way to make sure you don't get hurt," said Stoick, "Besides, I'd like to have a strong word with the one who wrecked my village."

"Fine, here's the plan," said Chloe, passing over a slip of paper that was began with Alvin and Anton's names and the rest was just a line of...interesting swearwords.

Stoick lifted an eyebrow. "Well, I can see that you're not much of a general," he said.

"I used to be," said Chloe coldly.

"Don't ask her about it, it's a very bad idea to do so," said Draco.

Stoick nodded before saying "You'll need a much better plan than this. Alvin only looks stupid."

"Let's not forget about Anton," said Hiccup.

"His hands will be mostly tied anyways," said Draco, "He's not usually allowed to kill people at worlds he visits. It's complicated but he won't use lethal force."

"He's never set krakens loose before either," said Chloe pointedly

"He didn't let the kraken loose, Alvin did," said Stoick.

"And who gave him the means to do that?" said Chloe darkly.

"Well, here's another question," said Draco, "Why did the kraken go

back to our base and only grabbed the carbuncle instead of completely sinking it if Anton was still controlling it?"

"Means it's probably broken free," said Chloe, adding "When has Atlantean tech ever worked as intended?"

Just then, Gobber ran over and said, "Stoick, Alvin's back. He's come with a list of demands and that kraken amulet of his."

"Fine, may I handle the negotiations?" said Chloe nastily.

"Only if I get to watch," said Stoick with a grin.

...

Alvin, to his credit, didn't even jump as Chloe landed on his ship's deck. "Hello, you must be the suicidal idiot who kidnapped my dear brother," she said, in her half/half form.

"Well, I can't take all the credit," said Alvin, "He was the one dumb enough to attack me on me own island."

"No, I'm surprised that he didn't just blow the entire island up in a blood rage," said Chloe calmly, grabbing an Outcast who tried to grab her, electrocuting him till he passed out, "Now then, we both know that if you had the kraken still, that you'd have used it."

"Rebuildin' Berk from scratch is too much work," said Alvin, "Wanna get the island in as solid a piece as I can."

"I think it's broken," said Chloe casually.

"Ya really wanna gamble over that?" asked Alvin, "My beastie's acquired quite a taste for dragon. It won't turn down an exotic meal like you."

"Your medallions got a crack in it," pointed out Chloe.

"It's an old talisman, but it still works just fine," said Alvin.

"Let me see it then," said Chloe before grabbing the medallion and sending a charge through which went into the chain around Alvin's neck and zapped him. "What do you know, it does work fine," said Chloe. Alvin got his vision back to be picked up by Chloe. "If you have ANY intelligence, you will release my brother very soon," she growled.

"Do ya think I'd be dumb enough to keep that flamin' idiot on me ship?" said Alvin, "He's on Outcast Island under tighter security than you'll ever get through."

"Then I really do need a reason to not kill you." said Chloe calmly

"Ya know, I don't think I've ever 'it a woman in me life, but I guess there's a first time for everything," said Alvin as he threw a punch at Chloe.

Chloe's hand shot up at snake speed and grabbed his wrist, Chloe being careful not to cut anything with her claws but stopping the punch dead. "Not very smart," she commented

She was tempted to just make a lightbulb out of him, but she was in a bashing sort of mood so she just slammed him repeatedly against the ship. After a bit, her comm buzzed. "Excuse me, I've got a call," said Chloe before tossing Alvin up on top of the mast.

The other Outcasts were staring in horror as she put a talon to her ear. "Yes? I'm kind of busy here," she said sternly, backhanding an outcast who tried his luck.

"Chloe, did you convince Stoick to help out?" asked Chip's voice.

"I've made a good start. I still need to tighten up the details...hold on," she said, stopping and sending a lightning bolt into a sword blade that an Outcast had before turning back to her comm call, "It might take a few more minutes."

"Out of curiosity, who is it you're fighting now?" asked Chip.

"Alvin," said Chloe promptly.

"He tried to attack Berk again, did he?" asked Chip.

"He tried. He's lost control of the kraken, unless the control 'amulet' survives being put together with paste," said Chloe calmly, looking up at Alvin.

"Sounds like a good opportunity," said Chip.

"For what?" asked Chloe.

"You haven't sunk his ship, have you?" asked Chip.

"No...I'm standing on it," said Chloe calmly, kicking the mast to make Alvin fall back down.

"Then it ought to be good for a good old Trojan horse maneuver," said Chip.

"I like that idea..." said Chloe, turning off her comm and kicking Alvin, "Oi, stupid, wakey-wakey."

"What now, ye blasted 'arpy?" asked Alvin.

"I have to admit, you're a lot braver than a lot of bad guys I've met," said Chloe, "But that better not be moronic bravery because I'd rather not have to dumb down what I'm about to say."

With that, Chloe lifted Alvin up by the collar, apparently listening to something before she shrugged, closed her eyes and reopened her now red ones. "Hi, I'm her resident psychopath, Silvia," she said, flicking out her claws on her spare hand and saying "Now then, here's your choices: help me...or I bite your head off one chunk at a time."

Alvin glared at her before saying, "You put up a 'ard deal, but I guess I'll have to go along. What do you 'ave in mind?"

"You are going to give me your ship," said Silvia, grinning in a way that most sharks preferred rather than to show any friendliness

"If you think I'm gonna let ya sail away with me ship, yer more crazy than ya look," said Alvin.

"Oh don't worry, you'll be coming along too," said Silvia, "A plan like this needs a figurehead."

"What?" said Alvin before a fist descended on his head, sending him to sleepyland for a bit before Silvia turned her comm back on.

"Guys, we have a way onto Outcast Island that won't have us being shot out of the air. Get every wannabe pillager ready and let's ship out."

...

A droid marched into Anton's room and saw Matt out cold, Kai 'playing' with the torture device. "Yes?" asked Anton.

"The Outcast leader's ship is returning," said the droid calmly.

"How charred does it look?" asked Anton, sounding amused.

"Scans indicate light damage," said the droid calmly, before asking "What are our orders?"

"Hmm, what do you think, my dear?" asked Anton to Kai.

"I don't know. It looks like Draconus just doesn't want to come out," sighed Kai, snuggling Anton and causing Matt to growl angrily.

"Kai, when I get out of here...I'll probably go easy on you until Kala gets back control," said Matt, "But Anton's gonna have to learn how to sonic roar without a tongue!"

"Aw, that's so cute..." sneered Kai before looking at Anton, "Can't we kill these Vikings now?"

"You know we can't kill off timeline specifics," said Anton.

"Pretty please?" asked Kai, batting her eyelashes.

"Well, maybe we'll just pick off the spares," said Anton. Kai clapped her hands happily at that. "Well, we have time to kill before the transport arrives," said Anton, "Shall we entertain ourselves with the locals?"

"After you, darling," said Kai before an explosion was heard, followed by gunfire.

"What the hell?" said Anton angrily, walking to the door and opening it to see a gunfight down at the docks, the droids and Outcasts fighting an equal force of mercs and Hooligans.

"Sounds like my rescue party," said Matt, "I'll take my equipment, my girlfriend, and some payback for you on the side."

"Kai, go kill them, put up a good act," said Anton coldly before, as she left, saying "You know...I think the Emperor would understand if you arrived dead."

"And I'm guessing Taleth no longer cares about me being alive anymore," said Matt.

"You caused far too much trouble and killed his mate. He wants you extremely dead," said Anton calmly.

"I figured as much," said Matt, "And needless to say, I haven't endeared myself to you enough to make you go against your bosses' orders."

"On the contrary, I'm going to enjoy this," laughed Anton, aiming a slash.

...

Meanwhile, on the Arctic Sea, a rather unusual crew was rowing a smaller boat northwards.

There were several voices heard, Draco's was heard saying "Urgh...give me another fur, it's freezing."

NegaMorph said "It's not that cold. I just can't see why we can't use the engine."

"Because the kraken will notice if we're using tech when we're close to its lair," said Chip "We've gotten as far as we can with it. Besides, rowing builds up all your muscles."

"Why don't I fly ahead andâ€¦|" began Contrinus before everyone said "NO!"

"Gary, you're not pulling hard enough," said Megan, "I'd rather not be on open water if the kraken decides to show up."

"I'm conserving my strength for when we'll need it in free the carbuncles," said Gary, "By the way, why have you been called in a 'crak-ken'? I thought it was pronounced 'cray-ken'."

"Actually, it's pronounced 'krok-ken' in the original Scandinavian and 'krak-ken' is closer to that," said Megan, "Besides, it rolls off the tongue better."

"I think 'kray-ken' sounds more original," said Gary.

Megan gave him an annoyed look and said, "It's a mythological creature, I can call it what I want."

"It's only mythical if it doesn't exist," said Draco, shivering from the cold

"Why don't we ask it how it pronounces it?" asked Morph.

"Oh please, it's nowhere near...and it's behind us, isn't it?" said Chip, annoyed before everyone, looking past him, said "Yup."

Chip turned behind and up at the looming island that was the kraken. "Erm, Bah-weep-Graaaaagnah wheep ni ni bong?" tried Chip. The kraken lifted up a tentacle out the water before holding it rather pointedly over them.

"Hold up, hold up, we've come to bargain!" called out Megan. The kraken paused and let out a low growl.

"Sure would be easier if we had a translator," said Draco.

"Or a direct telepathic connection," said Megan before picking up Draco and twisting his horns like TV antennas.

Draco yelped, "Look, I can't simply be used as a-" he began before going rigid and saying in a rasping tone "What are you tiny things doing here?"

"We've come here to help you," said Chip, "Tell me, how long have you guarded the creatures in that cave?"

"That information is not for you. I guard the little exploding ones because I wish to," said Draco, his eyes rather worryingly starting to point in different directions.

"Is that truly what you want to do or is that what you've been shackled to do by the ones who came before?" asked Chip.

"The other tiny ones shackled me. I crushed them," said the kraken via radio Draco.

"But what if we removed those shackles?" asked Chip, "You don't have to be bound to this one place anymore."

"I am not. I choose to be here. Why do you choose to enter my home?" said the kraken nastily.

"Er, I don't suppose you wouldn't mind if we took those creatures off your tentacles. I mean, what are they to you? You don't own anything to those people who shackled you," said Megan.

"The little ones stay," said the kraken in a rather final tone.

"I'll trade you for them," said Morph.

Draco turned his head to look at Morph "What would you offer for lives?"

Morph looked stumped as he tried to figure something out. Then he sighed and pulled out a metal briefcase. "I offer my collection of special shiny red rocks," said Morph.

The kraken reached down and picked up the crate without effort before dropping it on Morph. "No," was the reply.

"Aw, but they're really shiny, take a look," said Morph clicking open the clasps. The others quickly moved to the opposite side of the

boat.

The kraken peered closer before tossing the crystals over the side. "No," it said angrily.

Just then, the briefcase beeped, "Warning, radiation containment deactivated, please clear immediate area." There was a burst of light, the experiments ducking down, remembering the last time Morph's 'collection' had gone off before peering out to see a huge statue above them, the kraken. A few cracks were already visible, indicating that this wouldn't last forever though.

"Let's get those little critters and get out of here," said Chip.

"Preferably before he wakes up and crushes us," said Draco nervously, noting that one of the kraken's eyes was still normal and was aiming a death glare that was worthy of Chloe.

"My pretty shiny collection, your sacrifice will not be in vain," said Morph before asking, "Where's the front door again?"

...

The carbuncles were watching the mayhem through one of the feeds. Despite their looks, they were intelligent enough to turn on a security feed. "Does this mean he's gonna make a mess again?" asked one, referring to the kraken.

"He's not going to be happy when he gets out of there," said another carbuncle.

"You mean IF he gets out of there," said a third carbuncle.

"If, if would be good," said the second.

The damaged computer, which had long presumed the carbuncles were the base's crew, said "The defense unit has not suffered a permanent burst of reality energy...estimate 1 hour to rejuvenation." getting another carbuncle to say "Yay, one hour to a good fight."

"You think those guys will free us?" asked a younger carbuncle.

"Who cares? It's entertainment either way," said another carbuncle getting sounds of agreement.

"Still, it would be nice to be able to leave this cave," said the younger carbuncle.

"Why? We have all the food we want here," said an older carbuncle as a view showed the experiments trying to get past one of the base's more imaginative traps which involved the walls sandwiching a victim, in this case Draco and Morph.

"Well I don't like that big cuttlefish always watching us all the time," said another carbuncle.

"Ok, vote time. If they get in, who wants to blow them up?"

After the carbuncle paws voted for blowing up was counted, the

younger carbuncle said, "Who votes for letting them rescue us when they get in?" The same number of paws was raised.

"Ok, compromise, we'll blow them up if they get here, THEN we let them rescue us," said the first carbuncle. There were several cheers at that.

...

The experiments finally broke through the last door, none of them in a happy mood. The base had almost been as creative with traps as the spiderbots. "I swear, those Atlanteans were downright malevolent," said Chip.

"Yeah, they've thrown just about every trap at us but a tiger pit," said Draco.

"This had better be worth it," snarled Contrinus, who had lost her patience after a close call with an ice beam.

"I'm sure the little guys will be grateful for us freeing them," said Morph cheerfully, never getting scathed for long by a trap.

"Hey, the scanner says they're in here. What's with all the ro-oh no," said Chip weakly as every 'rock' in the room began glowing.

"They've come to greet us," said Morph, blissful ignorant as usual.

The explosion was pretty big, destroying the room and leaving all the experiments blackened. "Ow," rasped Draco weakly.

Morph regenerated and said, "Aw, we just startled them. Carbuncles, you are free!"

The carbuncles all unfolded before running past the group, one stopping and saying in a good English accent, "Thanks guys." causing Draco and Contrinus to get a nervous twitch.

"You can talk?" asked Megan.

NegaMorph groaned "Yes they can." before a blast blew him up as the carbuncles screamed "DEMON!"

"Ok, so now that we've found them, how are we supposed to get them out of here before the kraken breaks loose?" asked Gary.

"They're stealing the boat," said Chip causally, looking at a surviving screen.

"Oh sure, that'll keep them safe from the kraken," said NegaMorph sarcastically, "Never mind my incredible shadow portal that can lead to almost anywhere on the planet."

"They worked out the engine, smart little guys," said Contrinus, peering at the view.

"So...how do we get back?" asked Megan.

"I guess we start flying," said Draco. There was a chorus of complaints and a few pieces of rubble tossed at Draco at that idea.

"Well, as long as we're clearing out this place, we might as well be thorough," said NegaMorph as he started working on one of the last remaining computers.

"I doubt there will be anything worth salvaging here," said Chip.

Then NegaMorph opened up a page and said, "Ooh, this looks promising."

Draco peered to see a schematic. "Oh...a new vehicle?" he asked.

Chip took a look and said, "Hmm, should be feasible to construct once we get to the Atlantean colony on Avalar." He downloaded a copy of the file and said, "Oh, this is interesting, it seems there may be one in storage here."

"Good, cause I think the krakens loose," said Draco casually.

"What gives you that idea?" asked NegaMorph before a tentacle came through the ceiling and yanked him out with a literal 'yoink' noise.

"What makes you think this submersible would be safe from the kraken?" asked Megan.

Chip said, "Knowing the Atlanteans, it can probably sink a continent."

"Don't you think that's a bit hyperbolic?" asked Gary. The others paused to look at him. "What? Just because I was originally born a few centuries ago doesn't mean I can't have an extensive vocabulary?"

"Let's just get out of here before the kraken finishes with NegaMorph," said Draco.

"Think he's indigestible to the kraken?" asked Contrinus.

"I wouldn't want to be up close if he was," said Draco.

A 'ptui' was heard before NegaMorph landed in a splat beside them. "It wants seconds," he groaned.

"Then let's hurry," said Chip, "I've read and seen enough adaptations of 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea to know that you don't want a giant cephalopod manhandling your submarine."

Morph settled it down by yelling "RUN AWAY!"

...

The Outcasts, meanwhile, were getting a battle they wouldn't be forgetting soon. It's bad enough that the Hairy Hooligans are attacking, but they have dragons on their side. Not to mention the

various additions to the crew were too preoccupied with fighting their counterparts with beams of light.

Chloe sliced another droid down before stomping towards the main square, punching out an Outcast as he charged her before slicing down another droid to see Kala. "There you are!" she snapped angrily.

'Kala' turned and give an unnervingly wide grin. "Well, if it isn't Chloe," she said so sweetly you could tell it was frosted over something deadly, "I've wanted to have a girl-to-girl chat with you for some time."

Chloe raised an eyebrow at that before she mentally turned on her lie detector on her wrist comp. "Where's Matt?" she asked carefully.

"Sleeping off our big fun reunion," said Kala.

Chloe raised an eyebrow at that "Really? I usually need a crowbar to keep him out of a fight...try again." she said calmly.

'Kala' pouted and said, "I thought we were good friends. Don't you trust my word?"

"Then explain who turned you back? Even WARDEN said we needed to recode you," said Chloe nastily before sending a bolt of lightning at Kala.

Kala jumped back and threw a fireball at Chloe. "Just to let you know, you started this fight," said Kala before unleashing a triple flamethrower at Chloe.

Chloe's reply was a double lightning bolt, snapping "I thought you were dead, Kai. I pay alot more attention than my brother."

"Wasn't Silvia dead too after Omnirus sucked her out?" responded Kai.

"Point to you, now go back to hell," said Chloe nastily.

"Only if you come with me," said Kai before making fire erupt where Chloe was standing. After a minute, Kai ceased the flames before sighing "Oh well..." before a lightning blast hit her in the chest, Silvia strolling out of the smoke.

"You were never good enough for my brother, even if he is a wimp," snarled Silvia.

Kai snarled as well, trying to shift to her anthro form, which was still a Night Fury before Silvia punched her back down "You don't really think you stand a chance, do you?" asked Silvia, "I have a lot more experience and training than you do. You barely have a dark side to reflect." Kai got up unsteadily before Silvia knocked her back down again and continued, "Even your dragon form's on low power."

Kai snarled and opened up her mouth to breathe fire at Silvia when Silvia grabbed a nearby bucket of water and tossed its contents into Kai's mouth, resulting in a lot of steam and coughing. "Had enough?"

said Silvia, aiming her blade at Kai.

"I'm just getting warmed-" started Kai before a big blast of water soaked her. Silvia looked behind her to see Steampipe crawling up onto the beach.

"Erm...thanks?" said Silvia confused before noticing Steampipe making a beeline for the hut Kala had come from.

...

Anton wasn't the type to finish people off with one blow. He preferred to make as many wounds as possible and let the damage add up. Matt looked like he'd been dropped in a box of knives from the cuts that Anton had given him. "Well, looks like it's time to go. Kai should have subdued or killed Chloe by now, so..." he began, aiming a slice before the wall was smashed and a mouth chomped him.

Matt looked up to see Steampipe thoughtfully chewing on a protesting Anton before spitting him away with a loud 'ptui'. "Thanks...for once you were actually-" Matt began before he was swallowed. "Shoulda known," muttered Matt, not quite in the mood to be fighting his way out, "Oh well, at least I've built up a tolerance to the venom, unlike Anton."

...

Chloe winced as Anton was spat out the building, followed by Matt who slid to a halt at her feet. "Chloe, about time you got here, have you caught Kai?" asked Matt. Chloe nodded over at Kai, who was being helped up by Anton. "Oi! That's my girl! Paws off!" yelled Matt.

Anton grinned. "I think she likes it where she is," he sneered.

"I've been through too much to just let her slip away now," growled Matt, "Now get away from her before I come over and pull out your teeth."

Anton laughed. "Please...you got blood...blood loss and I'm at full stre-" he began before apparently pausing, Kai peering at him before tapping him, causing the luckless guy to keel over like a statue.

"Yeah, I was like that the first couple of times after being chewed on by Steampipe," said Matt, "I think I might have been trippier though."

"Different people, different reactions," said Chloe, the two walking forward while Kai tried to back up.

"Kai, I'm only going to ask nicely once: surrender and let us take you prisoner until we can get back to Avalar or just give Kala back control now," said Matt. Kai glared and readied her claws...only to be shot in the back by a stun blaster.

"Ok, let's bring her back," said Matt before asking, "By the way, what's happened with OmegaMorph? I assume that someone's already taken care of him."

At that point, a burst of energy hit the Lynches, the Morph of the hour appearing from the air. "You rang?" he sneered.

"Did I keep you waiting?" asked Matt as he started pulling himself up, "I've had a couple of people lined up to kill me and I hadn't gotten to you yet."

OmegaMorph grinned before sending a burst of energy that sent Matt flying back. "Please, you haven't got a chance," he sneered.

Matt got back up and said, "Sure I do, I just don't want to do it here," before shifting to dragon form and flying off.

OmegaMorph shrugged, readying some shadow wings and taking off in pursuit. The two of them sped across the ocean, OmegaMorph throwing the occasional energy burst at Matt. "So, you have an actual plan, Lynch?" taunted OmegaMorph.

"Well, I mostly came out here so there'd be less collateral damage," admitted Matt, "But it also gives me plenty of elbow room."

OmegaMorph sensed what was coming, sending up a field of energy as Matt sent a blast of plasma at him. After the attack dissipated, OmegaMorph laughed and said, "Throw as big an attack as you can, I'll still shrug it off."

Matt's reply was to tackle OmegaMorph, digging his claws in and trying the old plasma control trick. OmegaMorph's form started to distort, but OmegaMorph interrupted by punching Matt in the face.

"It takes more than that," OmegaMorph roared before sending a paralyzing blast into Matt's wings. Matt winced but managed to get his wings into a gliding position before he hit the water.

OmegaMorph just laughed before he paused, some orders arriving via text that appeared in his vision...orders to fall back. "Oh, come on..." he groaned before being tazed. "Fine, fine," he snapped. He looked down at the wavering Matt and said, "I'll guess I'll have to deal with you next time. If you don't drown before that." He then flew off.

...

Most of the fight was over by the time Matt made it back to shore. Anton had managed to exit stage left by the time that he had made it and Kai was screaming death threats in Avalarian at anyone near.

"Ok, give me one good reason why we shouldn't be leaving this backwater planet right now?" growled Matt, who had been battered around by Steampipe like a seal's ball before he managed to get to shore.

"The victory feast?" suggested Gobber.

"Look, sooner we leave, the sooner these guys leave," said Matt, pointing to the wrecked droids.

"Well, we'll need to find our funny little friends," said Chloe.

"Where are they?" asked Matt.

"Up at the Arctic, trying to do a rescue mission," said Chloe.

"Hey, boat coming in," called one of Matt's men, pointing to something speeding towards the docks.

Chloe looked and said, "That looks like the experiments' boat. Huh, I expected them to have sunk it."

"It's not slowing down." said Chris carefully.

"If I know those guys well enough..." started Matt before turning to the Vikings and saying, "Please leave the area within 50 feet of the docks."

On cue, the boat smashed into the shore and shot up the shore before smashing. After the dust settled, Matt said, "I suppose it was only a matter of time before those guys added a boat to their list of stuff that they wrecked. Alright, you little maniacs, come on out of there!"

What poked its head out wasn't an experiment; it was a blue version of the exploding fox from earlier. "So...they went to rescue the carbuncle," said Matt.

"No, they went to rescue all the carbuncles," said Chloe. Matt turned back to see almost all the carbuncles looking at him. Toothless and the other dragons covered their ears with whines as Matt screamed

The Vikings watched as Matt ran, closely pursued by all the critters. "What in Odin's beard are those things?" asked Stoick.

"Carbuncles, dad," said Hiccup, "And the reason Matt's running from them is because they like to blow themselves up." There were several explosions behind the building that Matt and the critters had vanished behind as if to emphasize the point.

"Don't worry, we'll be relocating them to a more suitable habitat where they won't be causing trouble and be free to live their lives," said Chloe before pausing and musing, "Or we could let them run around here on Outcast Island for a while."

...

The rebuilding of the village didn't take very long with the gang's help. Having things like gravity grapples and welders helped alot too. While most of the tension had left with the successful attack on Outcast Island, there were still a few people who glared at the crew. Most of them just gawked however.

"Look, we have to do it," said Chris as Matt came in.

"Do what?" asked Matt.

"We can't leave their memories intact. It'll wreck the timeline,"

said Chris sternly.

"Oh, that," said Matt, sounding a little sad, "Can't we at least leave the kids' memories intact?"

"No...gotta be total," said Chloe sadly.

"It's not like we're going to be coming back here," said Techo.

"You're right...but we can't just blast their memories" snapped Matt.

"Their memories would cause a lot more harm than good," said Chris.

"Fine...you handle everyone else...I'll deal with the kids," said Matt, dully.

Chloe gave him a suspicious look and said, "Really?" Matt nodded, activating the mindwipe system on his wristcomp and walking out.

Chloe sighed and said, "As soon as the experiments show up, we head back at the orbit, stop to pick up the Constructicons on the moon AFTER they dismantle their base, fly over to the sun and toss those bloody wolfstones in, then we head back to Avalar via the most optimal route."

...

Matt walked in to hear the kids celebrating their victory, even the dragons celebrating. "Hey kids, quite a battle we had today, eh?" asked Matt.

"Yeah, we got to beat up those Outcasts good and proper," laughed Ruffnut.

"And we ran off all those creeps who were trying kidnap Kala...and stuff..." said Tuffnut.

"That's right." said Matt, pulling out a fingerless glove, a metal disk on the palm and a LED control on the back that Matt began typing commands into.

"Matt, you don't seem as excited," said Astrid.

"Yeah...I just have one job to do first before we head off," said Matt, Hiccup seeing several flashes from the town.

"Matt, that's the memory-eraser glove, isn't it?" asked Hiccup.

"Afraid so..." said Matt casually.

Snotlout immediately pulled out his sword and snapped, "Nobody's messing with my head!"

"Might not need to mess around with it, it's enough of a mess already," said Matt, "A simple bonk on the head's probably all that's

need. No, wait, that'd make you forget too much. We'll just use this then." Snotlout and the others didn't have long to move before Matt held up his gloved hand, palm out before there was a flash of light.

"Sorry about that, mates. It's been a great honor," said Matt, "You might have a little subconscious memory, something that'd pop up in a dream and dismissed just as easily. I probably shouldn't be talking like this and I might to flash you again to forget what I'm saying right now but I felt like I owed you that much."

He held up his hand again, the glove already set for that. Two buttons flashed, one would activate the wipe while the other would cancel. Matt sighed before deciding.

...

The iceberg that was holding the cruiser for untold years was finally breaking away. A large part of that was due to the kraken attacking, but the most driving force at the moment was most likely the cruiser rising up into the air.

Matt was looking at a feed from the ship's brig, where Kai was sitting, smirking at the camera. "Set a course. Let's get out of here," he said.

"Hey, it's not nearly as bad as the last time Kai was last in Avalar," said Techo only to shrink back when Matt glowered at him. "I see you do not wish to be reminded of that," said Techo.

"I do not. I had to brain wipe the only decent kids here and my girlfriend's psycho again," Matt snapped.

"A treatable condition," said Chris, "Just bring her back to that Atlantean colony and they'll get their brain and body pointing in the right direction again."

Matt glared. "Chris, you can look after Kai then...AND WHERE ARE THE REST OF THE CREW?!" he yelled.

"Sir, we're picking up a large object in the water," said a techie.

"Not the bloody kraken again," groaned Matt.

"No, this thing's mechanical," said the techie.

"What?!" snapped Matt, before he ran to a viewport to see triangular shape surfacing below them. The surface frothed a bit before a steel hull surfaced, vents on the sides of it opening and released gusts of stale air.

Matt squinted before seeing Draco emerge and wave to them. "GRAB THAT SHIP!" yelled Matt.

"Activating tractor beam," said the techie before a green light shone from the cruiser onto the structure below. Slowly, it lifted up out of the water, revealing itself to be a submarine of an advanced design.

"As soon as you have them, put them on brig duty too," snapped Matt.

"Sorry, captain, but you're not allowed to do that," said Techo.

"What do you mean?" demanded Matt.

"There's a very clear passage in the NSC lawbook that says that salvaging new vehicles requires debriefing of the ones who found it first," said Techo.

Matt grinned evilly at that. "Good, the rules don't apply anymore," he said.

"You should at least inspect it," said Techo, "You know, make sure it's worth the mass."

"We tossed out the rule book first day on the job," said Chloe.

"Ok, but you're the one who's got to go down and tell them they're on brig duty," said Techo.

"Gladly," said Matt before walking off.

"They're gonna kill him," said Techo casually.

"Not directly," said Chloe.

...

Matt had forgotten that one of the crew members he was going to punish was also a witch. And apparently she has been practicing her rope magic considering he was currently dangling from outside the ship.

"Let me in! THIS IS MUTINY!" he screamed.

"Nope, this is karma," said Megan before calling, "Oh Steampipe, we'll be leaving for good in a while and this will be your last chance to play with Matt!"

"You miserable little-" began Matt before he vanished as Steampipe chomped him

Chloe walked to the cargo door and asked, "So, how long should we let them play?"

"Well, we have gotten every last wolfstone, right?" asked Megan.

"Might need to do a flyover to check," said Draco, "Not to mention we need to take those Smothering Smokebreaths from Berk back to Breaknog Bog where they belong."

"I got all the stones," snapped Chloe.

"Oh, good," said Megan, "Then we just need to take care of the Smokebreaths."

Just then, Steampipe surfaced again, Matt trying to get out of his mouth. "SMEE! Er, I mean, CHLOE!" yelled Matt before Steampipe snapped around him again.

Chloe sighed, "He can get out of it himself this time."

"I'll save you, captain!" cried Morph before he ran past, oddly enough wearing a blue and white striped shirt, a red floppy hat, and half-moon spectacles.

The others just blinked before leaving, Draco muttering why they couldn't have stayed on Kauai.

* * *

><p>There's the final chapter. Sorry it took so long to upload. The original idea was to make this a two-parter but then I realized that I didn't have enough material for a two-parter. Of course, I've also been pretty busy with other things that took up a lot of my time.<p>

Anyways, since this was the final chapter, I'd thought we'd go out with a bang, what with Alvin's involvement and the kraken. It's been a moderately good story, hampered by the fact that we couldn't use season 2 material, but it was worth to be able to make a butt monkey out of Mildew. It's not very likely that we'll be doing another story based in this universe, but we'll be moving on to other stories that will have less constraint. The next story is still in the development stage but it will probably be started before too much time has passed. In the meantime, check for other updates for other stories and please review.

End
file.